Maria das Dores Guerreiro, Justus Twesigye,
Ingrid Höjer, Staffan Höjer and Elizabeth Enoksen
(editors)

Families, Children and Youth in Global Contexts

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FAMILIES, CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN GLOBAL CONTEXTS

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Preface

It all started in 2005 as a result of personal initiatives from researchers in family and child studies in several countries. With enthusiasm, hard work and patience but also with support from local universities promoting international collaboration, the Erasmus Mundus Master in Social Work with Families and Children (MFamily) was born in 2013. Iscte-University Institute of Lisbon has generosily hosted the programme with a creative and welcoming atmosphere for students from all over the world along with the teachers.

MFamily started timely with the international concern over the growing number of immigrants and refugees seeking shelter, many of them in Europe. In a globalized world where migration caused by war or urge for a better life, families find themselves in new and challenging situations. Claims for applied knowledge arose with focus on parenting cross cultures and new claims on European welfare states. Poverty, patriarchy, women in exposed situation as lone or teenage mothers had been on the agenda for a long time but gained renewed interest.

The essays in this book are the result of the students in the first cohorts of their reviewed MFamily master theses. The knowledge accumulated throughout the students thorough efforts cuts deep into vulnerable people's everyday life and serves as an eye opener. Thereby the link between research and social work praxis is exposed as a tool to identify specific social problems and their possible solutions.

As one of the researchers who initially initiated what later became the Mfamily programme, I proudly leave to the reader to enrich their minds and contemporary ideas of what goes on among Families, Children and Youth in a Global Context.

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Perspectives on families, children and youth in global contexts
Introduction

Maria das Dores Guerreiro[1] and Justus Twesigye[2]

The well-being of populations in different societies largely depends on family relationships that provide their members with material and emotional living conditions, in line with standards considered socially and culturally appropriate. When endowed with the necessary resources, it is usual in families that their members find protection and well-being. Regardless of the transformations and dynamics in the sphere of private life in different societies, across diverse cultures and regions of the globe, the family remains one of the social institutions most valued by people (http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSOnline.jsp). Families are regarded as a safety net (Kirumira, 2017), which assures their members' identity, affection, care, trust and integration in social networks (OECD, 2011).

The ability of families, as elementary social units, to ensure emotional well-being and quality of life for their members from different generations reflects the structural conditions of the societies to which they belong (Back-Wiklund et al., 2011). Therefore, families require continued attention from public policies so that, when they prove ineffective, social responses and social action measures may be mobilised to address the gaps and problems identified which are preventing their effective functioning. Social sciences focus on the study of families and their various forms of existence and make a relevant contribution to the analysis of the circumstances pertaining to the family and to the identification of social problems in order to design and deliver relevant social welfare services for families and their members.

Significant changes in family life, which have been brought about by a number of factors, have occurred over the years; they include globalisation, modernisation, migration and urbanisation (Makiwane & Kaunda, 2018). With the current processes of globalisation, as in many other domains, new dynamics and problems emerge in the various elements of the family, especially among the women, children and youth

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(Guerreiro & Barroso, 2018). On the one hand, because of accelerated effect of new technologies in the present information society, different cultures cross with and influence each other, reproducing cultural practices in distant places that we associate with the most urbanised and technologised societies (Helman, 2007). On the other hand, massive populations have suffered displacement and are looking for better economic opportunities and futures. Others are moving to escape wars, terrorism, persecution or abuses of human rights. They usually carry with them habits and practices of everyday life that are difficult to accommodate in the social and cultural contexts of their host societies.

Families are actors *par excellence* of the afore mentioned experiences. Mothers and fathers who have migrated and make use of new technologies to reduce the associated cultural and geographical gaps put new forms of parenting and communicating within families into practice (Namuleme, 2019; Boldrine, 2019). In addition, migrant children are often the cultural mediators between the host contexts and their own adult family members. They are, for the most part, the first generation to become integrated and learn the language of the host country because of their access to the educational system; they easily succeed in the new socialisation process, learning the culture of their host country in a more effective way than their accompanying adults.

Immigration may represent great opportunities and benefits for those who migrate, for the countries of both origin and destination, but also challenges such as social inequalities and social exclusion of immigrant populations if not properly managed by governments and their development partners. Presently, high levels of "migrants of concern" (Helman, 2007, p. 307) have become globally prevalent. These include refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced persons, returnees and stateless persons (Helman, 2007). According to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), more than 70 million people have been forced to leave their homes. More than 25 million of these populations are refugees. Half of this displaced population is quite young, under the age of 18. In addition, according to the UN, there are several million immigrants to whom nationality has been denied as well as access to basic rights such as education, health care, employment and freedom of movement. Most of these displaced populations are concentrated in countries close to their own homes, from which they were forced to leave. Comparatively, those who seek shelter in more distant regions are few (https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/figures-at-a-glance.html).

The inception of the Erasmus Mundus Master in Social Work with Families and Children (MFamily) programme in 2013 coincided with the emergence of immigratory outbreaks and the crisis of refugees who arrived in various countries in Europe. In most cases, those who crossed the Mediterranean arrived in unsafe boats, which put their lives in danger. Many of those lost their lives in shipwrecks or because of the conditions in which the displacement occurred. Among them are the cases of children who drowned in the sea and women who gave birth in the boats, which embarrass those who believe in human rights but could not act to save the situation (Expresso, 2015). If war leads people to situations of despair and forced migration, many people leave their countries of origin in search of better economic

and living conditions. They find themselves in precarious jobs and experience different forms of social exclusion in the host countries. The exclusion occurs in the course of the early years of their arrival because they do not possess official residence permits or other requirements for effective social integration into the host community.

The above global social problems have inevitably concerned and engaged the faculty and students involved in the Erasmus Mundus MFamily Master's programme. Subsequently, students have been encouraged to conduct research for their dissertations on topics in the areas of immigration and refugees, and examine how structural and contextual forces such as immigration, poverty and gender inequality affect experiences of families, children and youth and related social welfare policies and social care.

This book, *Families, Children and Youth in Global Contexts*, brings together 14 chapters authored by the first cohorts of students of the MFamily Programme and based on the research for their master's dissertations. The authors represent 12 countries[3] from the five continents. These authors address many questions, which concern families, children and young people in vulnerable and adverse situations in diverse social, cultural and policy contexts. The authors' insights are enriched by cross-cultural learning, which the MFamily programme actively supports in many ways. These ways include admitting students from diverse countries and cultures, mobilising faculty to teach and mentor the students from a wide network of leading scholars in Africa, Asia, Australia and Europe, and ensuring the students' mobility to the extent that they spend a semester at each of the four Consortium Universities in Portugal, Norway, Sweden, and Uganda.

This book is organised in three sections. The first section, which comprises six chapters, covers topics on families, immigration and gender and addresses them from different perspectives. First, Marshalee Jones examines how immigrant mothers from different countries, residing in Norway, exercise parenting and the extent to which they do so in accordance with the country's socio-cultural standards. Abhas Dangol examines parenting styles of immigrant Nepalese mothers and fathers in Portugal. He reports that while mothers had adapted their parenting styles by being responsive and showing closeness towards their children, fathers insisted on raising children based on the Nepalese culture and values because they disapproved of the Portuguese culture. Hong Zhou examines experiences of Chinese immigrant parents in Norway and the different factors that contribute to an image of good parenting practices, alongside the stress caused by acculturation processes such as their difficulties with learning the indigenous language. Lilian Amankwa assesses the role of Swedish child protection professionals in promoting "good parenting" among immigrant parents in accordance with dominant conceptions of childhood, but without addressing structural challenges that undermine these immigrants' capacity for being good parents. Manika Bajracharya analyses

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3 Bolivia, Canada, China, Cyprus, Ghana, Italy, Jamaica, Mexico, Nepal, Nigeria, Norway and Uganda.

the changes occurring in gender relations between Nepalese female and male immigrants in Lisbon. She also analyses the ways Nepalese women gradually adopted new values and practices, and experienced greater freedom and felt respected by men, notably due to their professional participation and economic capacity. In her research conducted in Uganda, Elizabeth Emdal analyses how young mothers, beneficiaries of a local NGO became economically empowered, thus gaining the respect of their husbands and community members. These favourable outcomes notwithstanding, the prevalent patriarchal values and men's fear of jeopardising the traditional gender order still prevented some women's active participation in relevant economic activities.

The second section of the book consists of four chapters, which focus on children and young people in school and care settings, particularly foster care and rehabilitative institutions. Paulina Santos Alatorre and Firminus Mugumya examine the influence of different educational models based on traditional teacher-centred methods compared with methods in which students are active protagonists based on the beliefs and attitudes developed by them regarding education and learning. Raymond Tumuhairwe assesses the cooperation among different professionals working in a Norwegian school under the principle "one school for all". He reports on the utility and challenges that underpinned interprofessional collaboration and how these influenced the performance of professionals' roles in meeting the diverse needs of pupils in a school. Temitayo Adeboye reports on a comparative study involving children in foster care in Portugal and Nigeria. She examines how childcare systems in Portugal and Nigeria influence development of different types of relationships that children specifically established with their families along their life courses, and social relations settings in general. Tümmel Sabanci and Justus Twesigye report on the experiences of hope and aspiration of young people in Uganda who have benefitted from specific rehabilitation services provided by a local NGO, after experiencing significant social adversity including sexual abuse and exploitation. Despite the onerous experiences, the young people exhibited enormous potential and strength to cope with their traumatic past and hoped to live fully recovered lives because of the rehabilitative services.

The four chapters of the third section address children's well-being and welfare policy contexts. Lindsay Sellinger compares social policies in British Columbia, Canada and Norway, concerning the policy of child adoption. From her content analysis, several thematic categories emerged, either emphasising commonalities between both countries, related to the best interests of the child, or paying attention to the specificities of each country. Based on the assumption that countries can learn from each other, Katya Nogales Crespo analyses the possibilities of policy learning between Bolivia and Norway despite the uniqueness of each country. Greta Alessandro, who conducted her research in a refugee settlement in Uganda, assesses the implementation of Article 22 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. She examines the ways in which the refugee resettlement fulfilled and or failed to meet its obligations in ensuring children's needs concerning education, health and protection. In his chapter, Polycarp Musinguzi explores implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, focusing in particular on Article

12 regarding children's participation and limitations on its effectiveness in a Norwegian child protection organisation.

All together, these 14 chapters and the research on which they are based, represent an important contribution to understanding different perspectives on families, children and youth at a global level. These perspectives have important implications for social work and social policy in diverse social and cultural contexts.

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Part I | Families, Immigration and Gender Contexts

Chapter 1
Adaptation and conformity
Perspectives of immigrant mothers on parenting in Norway

Marshalee Jones[1]

Abstract: This chapter examines perspectives of immigrant mothers on parenting with the aim of assessing their performance according to parenting standards in Norway's social and cultural contexts. A qualitative study involving semi-structured interviews with immigrant mothers was conducted in Rogaland, Norway. The sample comprised eight mothers whose home countries were Somalia, Tunisia, Poland and Nigeria and who resided in Rogaland, Norway. The findings show that intercultural contact between immigrant mothers and the Norwegian society had difficulties and ambiguities. These challenges included dealing with issues of cultural clashes, cultural distance and undergoing learning and unlearning processes of sociocultural adaptation while striking a balance between two cultures and an intensely ambivalent relationship between these mothers and the Norwegian Child Welfare Services (Barnevernet). In conclusion, the concept of cultural sensitivity, while frequently used in debating issues related to intercultural contact, presented a paradoxical challenge in defining 'the best interest' for children who were the focus of policies and programmes centred on parenting. Immigrant mothers presented the view that parenting ought to be a personal matter. However, the Norwegian path-dependent values of egalitarianism and 'sameness' undermined the ability of child protection stakeholders to negotiate a position of mutual understanding resulting in an assimilationist as opposed to an integrationist approach to acculturation.

Introduction

Culture is a perfect manifestation of the 'taken-for-granted' reality. Culture can be so diverse, yet so specific, so fluid yet so stagnant, so appreciated, yet so undervalued. When the specificities of our own differences cross the expanse of our real or imagined demarcations to interface with those of another is the time when they become more identifiable, challenged, altered or more appreciated. Migration has become one of the fundamental mechanisms engineering our globalised world. It is considered a key part of contemporary social transformation, a powerful force for change that cannot easily be repelled by governments (Castles, 1998). Parenting is one of those culturally specific phenomena that journeys across geographical

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boundaries and contextual peculiarity, adding to the montage of a diversely globalised world. One author found it imperative to question, "If culture is such a powerful shaper of behaviour, what happens to individuals who have been developed in one cultural context when they attempt to live in a new cultural context?" (Berry, 1997: 6). Parents in particular contribute substantively to the anomaly that immigrants add to the ethnic composition of their new homes. Sluzki (1979: 385) argues that:

> Families, in their function as main socializing agents, convey not only the norms and mores of their culture at large, but also the specific styles, modes, values, and myths that constitute an ad hoc, family specific view of the world and of their own history.

The lives of immigrants are not 'transplanted' in a vacuum, but adding to their lives and families are their customs, traditions, cultures, ways of viewing the world, beliefs, ideas, etc. Immigration often involves varying degrees of social and cultural adjustments in the family's structure. The ideal of a good parent is deep rooted in values, customs and mores that differ across cultures (Quinn, 2005; Apple & Golden, 1997). Likewise, are the values that parents transit to their children. It is argued, "in the process of immigration, parents are often confronted with totally different child-rearing practices and ideologies held by the socialising agents of the host culture" (Strier, 1996: 373). For this reason, a simultaneous process of learning the host country's 'how to' while unlearning undesirable aspects of the individual's cultural repertoire that may conflict with the dominant/host culture's way of parenting is required from immigrant parents in order to expedite 'fitting-in' with the new society. This capacity is achieved through acculturation; "a dual process of cultural and psychological change and adaptation that take place as a result of contact between two or more cultural groups and their individual members" (Berry, 2005: 698). A number of factors, including the dominant attitude of the host country towards immigrants, influences such change and adaption in a new cultural environment.

Migration in the Norwegian context

The amalgamation of its sturdy economic backbone and generous welfare system makes Norway an attractive destination for those in search of improved life opportunities. Until the late 20th century, Norway was characterised as both an ethnically and culturally homogeneous country, and a large exporter of people (Eriksen, 2013; Sam & Berry, 1995; Melby et al., 2008). Today, however, migration trends are indicative of the fact that ethnic and cultural diversities are now greater than they have ever been (Andreassen et al., 2013). At the beginning of 2017, there were about 725,000 immigrants living in Norway. Polish and Swedish immigrants are the most populous ethnic groups adding to the plural composition of the population, while other migrants from Somalia, Syria, Pakistan, Lithuania, Afghanistan, the Philippines and other countries have also added to the growing population in Norway.

Eriksen (2013: 14) reported that alongside rapid growth of the nation's ethnic minority populations, debates about integration, immigration policy, multiculturalism and national identity have flourished in Norway in recent years. However, "it is true that in the 20th century, the project of national building and developing a welfare state entailed policies that aimed at creating a stable, homogenous national identity". To this end, research in the field of culture and immigration has described the preference to acculturating immigrants in Norway as assimilationist rather than integrationist in approach (Berry, 1997; Eriksen, 2013; Sam & Berry, 2006). This position is normatively justified by the fact that cultural pluralism is a relatively new phenomenon in Norway (Eriksen, 2013; Berry et al., 2006).

Eriksen (2013: 13) clarifies the complexity of the entanglement of state and national identity and the response towards acculturation:

> The thrust of Norwegian policies towards immigrants has nevertheless trended in the direction of equality, sometimes understood as assimilation. One reason may be that the same word, 'likhet', means both ''similarity'' and ''equality'' in Norwegian. In other words, no terminological distinction is made between equal rights and cultural similarity. Claiming equality, therefore, is an understandable thing to do, while claiming the right to difference is more difficult to handle ideologically. This is partly the result of the history of Norwegian nationalism; and partly an indirect outcome of the Labour-led construction of the welfare state, where equality has always been associated with cultural homogeneity (p. 7). The problem facing Norway and its national identity in this century is the fact that the country was founded on the premise of ethnic/cultural homogeneity, while contemporary Norway displays increasing diversity. In other words, the old map does not fit the new territory.

It becomes obvious that the threat of eroding national pride stands as a huge blockade to openness and acceptance of immigrants. As pointed out by Mahmoud (2013: 151), the construction of national identity in Norway "came to foster a sense of belonging and rootedness that promoted an imagined sameness and required therefore the suppression of internal differences and the creation of border makings". This, she argues, has led to the discursive recognition of immigrants as 'others' even when integrational strategies are taken to 'fit in'.

A sociocultural construction of parenthood?

The Norwegian Social Democratic welfare state regime largely transcends its primary principles of universality and equality to the wider social construction of society (Esping-Andersen, 1990). With this principle at the heart of policies concerning children and families, Norwegian child protection law has been characterised as 'culture blind' and colour-blind (Kriz & Skivenes, 2010a). The primary focus of not only the law but also child protection workers is to ensure that all possible strategies are taken to adequately secure the care and protection of children. The aforementioned authors reiterated that "in Norway, the state has historically been more willing to intervene in family life on behalf of children by providing in-home

services and especially by promoting equality of opportunity for children irrespective of their cultural background" (Kriz & Skivenes, 2010: 2648). The authors also reported the central importance of the welfare state's stakes in 'sameness' (or similarity) of experience for children. This approach presents a 'one-size-fits-all' approach to family intervention and is less conscious of differences emanating in a pluralistic culture. Kriz and Skivenes found that parents who were members of an ethnic minority group had different perceptions of child-care needs and child-rearing approaches in comparison to the native Norwegian parents. On the other hand, Sherr et al. (2011) found that the preferred parenting styles employed by minority groups often conflicted with the standard way of 'doing parenting' according to Norwegian expectations. The previously taken-for-granted morals and values such as authoritarian fathers, obedient children and control over girls that were endorsed by some immigrant families were highly discouraged in modern cultures obtaining in Norway. A problem that has arisen from the disparity between the Norwegian expectations of doing parenting is an overrepresentation of ethnic minority children in out-of-home care. Statistics indicate that ethnic minorities are twice as likely to be placed in alternative care than are ethnic Norwegian children. This statistic increases even more when considering first generations among this group (Dyrhaug & Sky, 2015).

Theoretical framework

The idea of individuals as cultural beings makes an interesting inquiry into how the acculturative processes encountered on introduction to a new culture aids immigrant parents in adjusting their parenting behaviours to suit the cultural fabric of the new country. Berry's acculturation theory (1997; 2006) is useful in understanding this adaptation process. In addition, negotiation culture, a theoretical underpinning indicative of what can be considered the most profound parenting approach in Norway, provides a possible contextualisation of 'doing parenting' in Norwegian eyes. However, the fact that Norway and Scandinavia in general is seen as a benchmark for other countries to emulate equitable child and family policies gives the researcher confidence that this theoretical framework is reliably representative of how parenting standards are generally outlined in Norwegian society. Together, these theories design an intricate focus on the extent to which minority parents may be confronted with a task of re-socialisation in order for their parenting approach to synchronise with that of the Norwegian society.

Acculturation theory

In a broad sense, acculturation provides an understanding for the processes involved in the initial and continued contact between migrants and host societies. It is understood as the meeting of cultures and the anticipated change that results thereafter (Sam & Berry, 2006). The authors also point out issues of contact, reciprocal influence and change that form the building blocks of acculturation. The reciprocal component of acculturation means that it is a dual process affecting both psychological and

cultural changes on micro, mezzo and macro levels. Sociocultural exchanges are the main trade-offs at the mezzo and macro levels, while the individual level involves changes in a person's behavioural repertoire (Berry, 2006). Even though acculturation is said to be bi-directional in principle, in real life, it tends to induce more change on the acculturating group. Therefore, immigrants are confronted with two very crucially pressing dimensions of acculturation: maintenance of their original cultural identity on the one hand and contact with other groups in the resettlement country on the other hand (Sam & Berry, 1995; 2006; Ward & Kennedy, 1993; Berry, 1997). Simultaneously considered, these two dimensions generate four possible acculturative strategies within acculturative groups and the host country. They are referred to differently depending on whether acculturative processes are being considered by either groups.

Acculturative strategies

From the perspective of the acculturating groups, when there is little interest in retaining one's original cultural identity coupled with an indulgence in cultural alternatives, assimilation is achieved. On the contrary, avoidance of other cultural groups while clinging solely to one's original culture results in separation. The outcome of seeking to participate in equally valuable interactions with other cultures and at the same time maintaining one's original culture is integration. Berry and others believe that integration is the most favourable acculturative strategy as it results in less acculturative stress among the acculturating group and is indicative of an acceptance of cultural diversity within the host country (e.g. Berry, 1997, 2005; Ward & Kennedy, 1993). In contrast, marginalisation is defined when one has no interest in either indulging in the dominant culture or seeking to retain their own original culture.

Negotiating culture: A Norwegian way of 'doing parenting'

A cultural shift has paved the way for contemporary parenting preferences practised in Norway in particular and in Scandinavia at large (Dencik, 1989; Sommer, 1998, 2005; Gullestad, 1996; Sommer et al., 2010). The traditional authoritarian way of 'doing parenting', a model built on hierarchical constructs which emphasises obedience from children, has been replaced by a form that is considered a culture of negotiation. Concretising this notion, Sommers et al. (2010: 210-211) observe that "it is not to be in concordance with "normality" if a Scandinavian father is a strict authoritarian, giving top-down orders to be obeyed by his child"; therefore, a parent is viewed as "an adult not having any contact with the feelings and understandings of his child". Cemented in the principle of the humanisation ethos, 'negotiation culture' is an alternative to authoritarian-stricken relationships. In general, it nurtures the creation of equality enveloped in one's opinion and interpersonal competencies, as opposed to the idealised inequality framed in social position, ranking, gender role or other undeserved dis/advantages upheld in authoritarian-styled relationships (Sommers et al., 2010). Thus, the negotiation culture implores families and the wider society to galvanise an environment in which children are seen and heard and their uniqueness and individuality valued, not taken for granted. Sommers et al. (2010: 13-14) explain:

> There is an underlying cultural understanding that a contemporary adult should be able to understand and empathize with children's perspectives. Parents, educators, social workers, and researchers all operate under the current ethos of humanization… The negotiation culture that characterizes contemporary families and society is unfeasible unless the parties basically acknowledge each other as separate minds — individuals each holding personal perceptions and opinions that form the very basis for conversations and negotiations … The humanization and individualization processes paved the road for the understanding of children as citizens … In this view, although young children do not match adults in terms of competence or experience, they are still considered their equals.

This paradigm also positions the child centrally in the family, instead of presenting parenting as a dichotomous entity.

From the theoretical frameworks presented, one can imagine that the acculturative process for migrants will vary significantly because of issues related, but not exclusive, to cultural distance, ethnic identity, willingness/openness to adapt to a new environment and how children are perceived/'positioned' in families. The culture of negotiation that underlines the Norwegian parenting model forms somewhat a 'benchmark' which immigrants of respective cultural backgrounds must live up to. This paves the way for the 'distance' that migrant parents inevitably have to walk to exude parenting repertoire synonymous with those expected with a culture of negotiation.

Methodological approach for data collection

This section discusses the methods and procedures adopted for sample selection, data collection and analyses as well as ethical considerations. Because the study's primary aim was to capture immigrant mothers' understanding of their experience of parenting measured with a yardstick of 'Norwegian standards', a qualitative research approach was considered to be appropriate. The researcher employed a phenomenological ideology, which informs an interpretive approach to exploring the idea of parenting within an intercultural context. This interpretive methodology is rooted in the principle of critical imagining, captured best through the minds and eyes of the mothers who can recount a reality of their experiences (Denzin, 2001; Holstein & Gubrium, 1995).

The sample for this study included eight mothers, two each from Nigeria, Poland, Tunisia and Somalia. Among this pool of participants, the Polish and Somali were from the largest immigrant group in Norway and the second largest group of 'Norwegian-born to immigrant parents', respectively. This is a good contrast with the other two groups of participants who represented just a minute percentage of immigrants to Norway. The sample also differed along religious lines; the Somalis and Tunisians were Muslims while the rest were Christians. These participants also varied according to social-economic status, vocation and age. The sample composition included a waitress, a nurse, a doctor, three housewives, a secretary and a miljøarbeider

(environment worker/therapist). The diversity with regard to their social economic status was a critical consideration because one's economic situation could influence parenting behaviour. These informants had been living in Norway for a minimum of six years, had two or more children and a good command of English. The final criterion was that participants should not have a history with child welfare services because this was likely to bias both their perceptions and experiences of parenting.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted because they offered both the interviewer and interviewee the opportunity to delve thoroughly into experiences, opinions or understanding of a phenomenon, which led to the production of dense and meaningful insight about the subject (Denzin, 2001; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). Open-ended questions were asked, which elicited explorative and descriptive responses, providing in-depth explanations that often resulted in certain 'markers' that necessitated probing. With regard to data analysis, thematic analysis initially seemed an attractive analytical method. However, upon coding the data, the researcher realised that most participants sought to engage in dialogues in the form of a narrative, which made it apparent that this technique on its own would not do sufficient justice to the analysis because it left salient explanations fragmented into thematic labels. Consequently, the researcher adopted a thematic-narrative analysis instead because it kept stories intact, while at the same time highlighting specificities, commonalities, and differences in the data set. Endorsing such analytical hybrids, Floersch et al. (2010: 408) argue, "concatenating analytic technique is possible, and it produces a multidimensional understanding of the object of study". A profoundly complementary feature of both narrative and thematic analyses is that they are windows into people's realities. Braun and Clarke (2006) recommend a six-step guide to doing thematic analysis, which the researcher found useful to exploit.

The ethical values which the researcher adhered to included ensuring confidentiality of the collected information, anonymity and informed consent of the participants and ethical review and research approval. The approval of this research was officially granted by the Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD). To ensure integrity and credibility of this study, the researcher adhered to the guidelines outlined by NSD as well as general research ethics.

Findings and discussion

Three anchor themes emerged from the data and formed the groundwork for analysis. Subthemes are used to heighten an interpretive frame that more aptly contextualises and explains the anchored themes. The most recurring themes that emerged from the findings are considered below.

Dealing with issues of cultural clashes

Strier (1996) postulates that migrant parents are usually greeted with parenting ideals in the host society that differ significantly from what they are typically

familiar with. Most of those differences are grounded in cultural specificities that inform the 'ideal child' that parents seemingly desire. Norway's circumstance is said to resemble that of a 'culture of negotiation' that creates an environment for equity in the status of both parent and child. Such an approach to parenting relinquishes structural and social barriers, providing children with the advantage to be 'present' and proactive in family life. Participants who are of the opinion that this approach to parenting clashes in several respects resoundingly echoed this fact:

The 'free Norwegian child

In her narrative, Wiktoria, a mother of three children explains her understanding of 'Norwegian parenting' and compares how this conflicts with the relationships with her children:

> I see the Norwegian parenting model as a liberal style parenting; this implies that children are given a lot of freedom to do what they want; they have no obligation and from my observation, very little rules. I think in Poland, it is more an authoritarian style parenting... we try to let children know that other people are also important, they have rights but because they have experience. We try to explain to our children their place in the family... We say, you have rights, but you also have obligations. I very often try to compare what kind of family model is used here in Norway... I know that children are important to Norwegian families; but they are given too much freedom. For us in my country, freedom is gained according to age; there is more as they get older. I think here in Norway, children have a lot of freedom from almost the start. Sometimes, I even think that children have more authority and power than their parents do. I have other Polish, Russians and Italian friends who think the same thing! In Norway, parents do not have power but in my opinion parents need to have power over their children; but children need to understand why... When my Polish friends and I observe the level of freedom that Norwegian children have, we sometimes think that we are over-protective; but we think so only when we are in Norway. However, in Poland, we never conclude that we are over-protective to our children — no, we feel normal! [Wiktoria]

Natalia shares Wiktoria's perspective, in stating that:

> It is very difficult to try to parent the Norwegian way because I cannot agree with children having no rules or boundaries... They do not have some rules. The children do what they want and they do not do anything at home... In my head I am thinking, if children are just sitting around at home, why shouldn't they help with some chores? Parents come home from work, they cook, they clean and they do everything. [Natalia]

I assume that the 'freedom' to which the mothers refer to is best understood through the linguistic of an 'autonomous/competent child' (Sommer et al., 2010). This perspective is based on recognising the inviolable self, necessary for promoting children's

autonomy and independence within families. Norway's focus on child-centeredness is understood by Wiktoria as "…sometimes I even think that children have more authority than their parents, more power than parents do". Maintaining a culture of negotiation requires that children are viewed as equals to adults; and are not limited by rigid hierarchical boundaries. Her argument that children 'have a place in the family' seeks to confirm her belief in reinforcing an asymmetrical relationship between children and adult and this contradicts the Norwegian understanding of egalitarianism and competency that permeates this society. Wiktoria's inclination to uphold positional distance between adults and children is an attitude that scholars would argue as being culturally imbued. In contrast, according to Sommer et al. (2010: 10-11), "the strong individuation perspective on the child is one of the most remarkable and persistent child-view of late modern Scandinavian cultures… The perception of self is coined as highly independent compared to the collectivised child-views of interdependence".

An emphasis on respect/discipline

They (children) would use certain words such as dumb, which to them means nothing serious, but to us, it is a big deal. Alternatively, when you are talking to a child and he/she just walks away instead of listening… It is disrespectful when they walk away from me. Therefore, these things cause friction because I was used to sitting and listening whenever my parents talk to me. I could not even think of walking away from them. Children here challenge your decision; they know they have the liberty to and they use it. I am the parent here, but they tell you, 'you need to listen to me as well, mom or dad'. See, we were not brought up to be challengers of our parents. We were brought up to listen and be obedient; but here when they challenge you, what do you do? ... Because of my cultural influence and the Norwegian influence, there is a kind of conflict... they do not really deeply understand my cultural background. They see their mother as being Norwegian and so they tend to think that if my friends can do this at home, I can as well do the same thing. However, my cultural background tells me that there are things that I can accept from you as a child; and there are things that are not acceptable. [Rose]

There is a way that we were brought up; of course, there is a way that we were expected to bring up our children that is based on the way that we were raised. However, here in Norway, it is actually very different; for example, a typical Norwegian parent does not believe in something we call discipline. We do not tolerate a child talking back to the parent because we expect that a child should be respectful. We believe in correction, but I think most Norwegian parents do not have the same belief. They believe that the child should be allowed to act as they will. It is his/her choice; it is his/her rights... But come on, who do we call a child, if a child is allowed to do everything he wants, whether stupid or sensible?... Children are allowed to do whatever they want… and I am not in agreement with that in any way… We were brought up to respect our parents; we were brought up to help our parents. [Kemi]

The narrative by Kemi highlights several temporal elements. She assessed parenting by first positioning herself as a parent within the Norwegian context and juxtaposing that with her own childhood and the parentage which she was exposed to. This is evident in her statements: "there is a way that we were brought up… based on the way we were raised". Kemi's remarks echo the thoughts of researchers such as (Quinn, 2005) who reported that parenting is a learnt behaviour that is also transmitted from one generation to the next. The mother believes that it is only fitting that she raises her children the way she was parented, regardless of the different cultural context in which she now lives. For Kemi, respect is achieved through disciplining, an imperative that "a typical Norwegian parent does not believe in". She further stated that "we believe in something called correction", an important child-rearing value that is not endorsed by Norwegian society. From my analysis, her statement implies that 'respect' requires obedience, a quality that is not highly valued in Scandinavian societies, as Gullestad (1996) and Sommer (2005) would suggest. Furthermore, there are different approaches taken for 'disciplining/correcting' children and some, though culturally supported, are taboo in the Scandinavian context-methods such as hitting, pinching or corporal punishment. Dencik (1989) laments that ideal virtues such as obedience and modesty were relatively obsolete in the Nordic region since parents of today could not forcibly demand respect from children, neither could they use the model of their own upbringing as a defence for commanding it.

A learning/unlearning process: social adaptation

My culture is quite different. When I came here, I left my culture behind me, but I quickly learned that if you really try to follow the parenting rules, it helps you in building a very good relationship with the children. I remember that I would quickly raise my voice to be firmer; but do I really need to shout to be heard? I do not need to pinch a child or instil fear to get my way with them. Instead, I have tried to build a very good relationship with them… Initially, it was not easy to engage my children in decision-making; but I found that when I did, I found more peace because I listen to them… Therefore, now we learn to interact, allow them to voice how they think things should be done. These are parents we have become. I have learnt to respect my children's opinion and to take them into action, not just you deciding for them… That is what we have to do, a kind of negotiating and compromising with each other… In my culture there is only one option; take it or leave it. [Rose]

Actually, I do not live like the way my typical cultural people live. We are in Norway, so I try to do it as they do here. I am convinced by the way they raise their children; I like that. Maybe I feel Norwegian. I have been living here for most of my adult life and I have learnt so much from them. Actually, it does not hurt to learn new and good things, so I try to practise doing it the way they do. Like listening to my children… Maybe others think that they do not have to do that but it will turn into problems, you know?... [Emna]

Studies on immigration theorise that regardless of the multiplicity of reasons motivating acculturation, adaptation always results (Berry et al., 2006); however, the

difficulty and eventual acculturation mode varies from one individual/group to the next. In general, adaptation signifies the changes that take place in behavioural patterns in response to the demands of a new society. Rose's narrative allows us to contrast the two opposing cultural ideals influencing her parental practices. She first reflected that her culture has been instrumental in informing her parenting style, "I remember I would quickly raise my voice to be firm…" but she acknowledged that the present culture offers different instructions, and thus made the necessary adjustments: "this is the kinds of parents we have become". Rose states, "initially, it was not easy…" Berry and colleagues have made similar inferences that adaptation is a long-term process and does not always lead to positive adjustments to the new society (1997: 20). In Rose's case, this process aided positive results because she was able to "find more peace because I listen". More specifically, sociocultural adaptation follows a linear path and increases with time according to Berry. With this fact, one can then see the gradual change in Rose's parenting style from being "quick to shout" to adapting an approach that seemed to reflect the ideal Norwegian parenting style: "kind of negotiating and compromising with each other".

An intense ambivalence towards the Child Welfare Services (Barnevernet)

Sometime ago I was afraid that maybe we have too strict rules in our family. Strict, not for my children but for the Norwegian culture, maybe. We know of a Norwegian institution [CWS] and a lot of us are afraid to be stricter with our children because we run the risk of this institution coming to our family and questioning the children or us. Friends who had been living here longer and are more familiar with the system cautioned us not to be so strict because even our neighbour can call the barnevarnet if they think that our children are unhappy. We also read a lot about different scenarios where this institution can intervene in your family. We were afraid and even though we would prefer to raise our children the way we like, it is difficult. [Wiktoria]

There are cases where we hear that barnevernet took over the care of the child… Unless there are psychological or emotional conditions to separate the child, but actions based on your culture, then I think it should be reviewed. They need to understand why, why that style, why that rule, why that model for that family. When we do such things, we perceive that we are doing them out of love for the child... It is going to be a challenging battle or topic to understand when you see an immigrant coming especially from our part of the world to the Western world. There will always be this friction between caution and liberty; we are used to caution. Children are expected to be mindful of themselves, how they behave towards their parents, you know. I believe that they should pay more attention to the values that your culture has instilled like respecting your parents, doing what your parents expect of you such as focusing on your studies rather than other things… There are certain cases where they really need to do something, such as in instances of abuse, addiction, neglect, etc. However, some just need to be assessed and see if it is just a cultural difference… [Kemi]

It is evident to say that within Norwegian society, the responsibility of safeguarding the well-being of children is a duty shared by several stakeholders including schools, the child welfare services and the family. The universal value of egalitarianism is one of the fundamental principles upon which these respective institutions design their mandate. From Kemi's narrative, one can sense that the primary antagonistic issue for parents of immigrant backgrounds is the misunderstanding between what they consider appropriate parenting practices versus those preferred in the Norwegian context. CWS is then seen as the family's 'policing' agency that ensures that families are fulfilling desired expectations. Incidentally, statistics indicate that in Norway, children belonging to ethnic minority groups were 2.7 times more likely to be placed in out-of-home care in comparison to children whose ethnicity is Norwegian (Dyrhaug & Sky, 2015). Comparative studies on child protection practices with immigrant families in Norway and England found that welfare workers in Norway (Scandinavia in general) and England utilised different approaches when assessing and making decisions about child welfare cases regarding immigrant children (Hort, 1997). Findings show that child welfare workers in England tended to be more empathetic towards and cognizant of cultural differences, while workers in Norway tended to be more ethnocentric and assimilationist (e.g. Kriz & Skinvess, 2010; Hort, 1997). In their study comparing child welfare workers in Norway and England, Kriz and Skivenes (2010, 2010b) concluded that whereas "social workers in Norway acted as cultural instructors, they focused on the needs of the minority child and instructed parents about Norwegian values and the Norwegian welfare system, social workers in England were cultural learners" (p. 4). The authors explained that this situation could be understood through a multicultural lens, which threatened to eradicate the delineated line between what was considered public versus private family affairs. The dilemma stems from the state's bid to secure the best interest of children; and these strategies taken may conflict with the parent's own ideals. The situation is assessed by Dahlstedt (2009) supported the notion that immigrant parents in Scandinavia were generally considered to be lacking in their parental abilities.

Conclusion

The above findings suggest that parenting in the context of immigration requires a process of socio-cultural readjustment, more so for the acculturating group. Themes that emerged from the study such as cultural clashes and sociocultural adaptation suggest an on-going process of learning and unlearning, which is necessary for migrant parents to lessen the cultural gap existing between their 'know how' and the 'Norwegian expectation'. It is evident that some migrant mothers perceived 'their way of doing parenting' as different from the way that was expected according to Norwegian standards. The divergence was more pronounced when subjects of child autonomy, child participation, obedience and duties for children were considered. The highly valued qualities of obedience and responsibility to the family were contrasted with the ideal of the 'free',

powerful, and self-interested ethnic Norwegian child who possess similar deci-sion-making power to their parents.

The researcher found that parenting in the Norwegian context was intertwined with national identity, the welfare state and enshrined in institutions. Both ensured the welfare of children and that families were systematically protected. With a welfare state built on egalitarianism, 'sameness' and a humanisation ethos, parenting habits-a product of nationalism, is cocooned in these fundamental principles (Sommer et al., 2010). Therefore, there is challenge of defining 'cultural sensitivity' in a traditional sense. While labels such as 'cultural instructors' (Kritz & Skiveness, 2010a, 2010b) used to tag Norwegian child protection workers, would point to cultural insensitivity or assimilationism, this needs to be deeply interrogated before conclusively agreeing on such labels. The parameters of cultural sensitiveness are rather paradoxical as one has to be 'culturally sensitive' to the country's focus on the fundamental values on which the society is built. Therefore, finding common ground between migrants' varied value systems and the Norwegians' will prove confrontational. In this situa-tion of acculturation, I borrow a participant's rhetoric and ask, 'who determines what is right versus what is wrong and when did different become wrong'? This is-sue is that cultural sensitivity is a grave controversy because it challenges the nation's history of socio-political path-dependency with the nuance of a clash between unity and uniformity versus diversity and differences. It thus challenges the migrant pop-ulation to synchronise their cultural ideals to resemble those of their host society. It is worthwhile to ponder: is it wrong for the host country to 'teach' their way of being? Is it wrong for the migrant population to 'learn how to do it'? However, what strategy do we use and where do we draw the line?

At the centre of this controversy are the children who are vulnerable to what-ever decisions are made. Ultimately, all decisions regarding the well-being of chil-dren ought to be made with a principal focus on children's best interest. Therefore, what is demanded in institutions such as CWS is a culture of negotiation that facili-tates dialogue between migrant parents and workers so that decisions can be made through dialogue and mutual understanding as opposed to the top-down ap-proach that seems to be currently employed. If we propose a culture of negotiation when addressing children, isn't this rationale also transferrable to the migrant pop-ulation? There is no doubt that this allows for smooth cultural exchanges and bi-directional learning, but primarily for the best interest of children to be arrived at on mutual grounds.

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Chapter 2
Migration and changing parenting styles among nepalese immigrant families in Lisbon

Abhas Dangol[1]

Abstract Different social and cultural contexts influence the practice of parenting and the standards applied to assess what constitutes good parenting. Nepalese immigrant families in Lisbon, Portugal are usually compelled to adapt their beliefs, skills and practices associated with parenting in view of the social and cultural expectations in their host country. However, it is not known how Nepalese parents from a collective Nepali culture approach parenting in Portugal, which presents with a broadly individualistic culture. This study's aim was to assess the parenting styles applied by Nepalese parents in the context of their immigration to Portugal. Participants were selected using snowball sampling techniques and data were analysed by the method of content analysis. The findings show that mothers were more responsive to their children and shared closeness with them more than the fathers, while the fathers were more demanding of their children to the extent that they set strict rules of conduct for their children. Moreover, some parents endeavoured to socialise their children in the Nepali culture and values because they thought that some aspects of the Portuguese culture were inappropriate for bringing up Nepalese children. In general, Nepalese immigrant parents incorporated elements of both the authoritative and authoritarian parenting styles. These findings suggest important implications for social work practice with children and families in the context of immigration in Portugal.

Introduction

Migration is a common phenomenon that has occurred throughout the history of humanity (International Federation of Red Cross, 2011). The International Organisation for Migration (2004: 41) defines migration as "a process of moving either across an international border, or within a state. It is a population movement, encompassing any kind of movement of people, whatever its length, composition and causes; it involves refugees, displaced persons, uprooted people and economic migrants". Every year, thousands of people migrate to different countries. There are more than 214 million international immigrants worldwide. International migration has increased considerably, particularly over the last few decades (Rashid, 2004). Economic factors are among the key drivers of migration. The number of

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Nepalese people who migrated in search of employment in foreign countries be-
tween 2006 and 2011 is estimated to be 1.2 million (NIDS, 2010). Portugal is one of
the preferred destinations for Nepalese immigrants in Europe, with approxi-
mately 4,798 Nepalese as legal residents (SEF, 2014). This number also increased by
44.6% in 2015 over the previous year. Portugal is often preferred by Nepalese im-
migrants due to many factors which include the presence of favourable immigrant
integration policies in terms of the labour market, mobility, family reunification
and long-term residence (MIPEX, 2011).

Migration, particularly family reunification in Portugal, implies the need for ad-
justment on the part of Nepalese parents and their children within a new social and
cultural system. Moreover, there is a huge disparity in terms of societal and cultural
values between the Portuguese and Nepalese. For parents living in Portugal, it is a dif-
ferent experience to their own when they were brought up and the parenting that they
are familiar with in their home country may not be appropriate in Portugal. Several re-
searchers on Asian immigrant parents in Western countries, especially the USA (Kim
and Ge, 2000; Shariff, 2009; Deepak, 2005; Rhee et al., 2003; Dosanjh and Ghuman,
1998; Inman et al., 2007), have shown that immigrants often experience difficulties in
adjusting to the values, culture and practices of their host countries. Kim and Ge (2000)
reported that harsh disciplinary practices by Chinese parents in the USA were associ-
ated with adolescent depressive symptoms among Chinese Americans. The parents'
"rigid" parenting styles often led to susceptibility of their children to crisis in educa-
tion and identity. The discrepancies between the cultures and values of their parents'
home countries and host countries were associated with challenges that undermined
children's integration in their host society. It is not clear if these findings also apply to
the Nepalese immigrant parents and their children in Portugal. This study aimed to fill
that research and knowledge gap.

Main authors and theoretical framework

This study examined parenting styles used by Nepalese immigrant parents in Por-
tugal and compared them with parenting styles used in Nepal. Baumrind (1967) is
reported to have developed the concept of parenting styles, which has been used in
many researches dealing with parenting. She suggests two main elements of
parenting, namely responsiveness (warmth and supportiveness) and control or de-
mand (Halpenny et al., 2010). Categorising parents based on whether they were ei-
ther high or low on responsiveness and control gives rise to three different
parenting styles. These are authoritarian, authoritative and permissive parenting.
Authoritarian parents are associated with a high level of demand or control but
with a low level of responsiveness; authoritative parents are associated with a high
level of demand and responsiveness while permissive parents are associated with
a low level of control but high level of responsiveness (Baumrind, 1967).

Matejevic et al. (2014) reported that authoritative parents were aware of their
rights as older persons, but also recognised the importance of communicating and
reaching decisions with children. These parents exhibited a certain degree of

control over their children but also ensured that they provided appropriate reasons for their decisions. Baumrind (1967) stated that authoritative parents used reason, power and shaping by regime and reinforcement to achieve parenting objectives and did not reach decisions based on group consensus or children's desires. Moreover, authoritative parents valued the autonomous self, will and disciplined conformity of their children. Authoritarian parents, in contrast with authoritative and permissive parents, expect complete conformity from their children. Children's behaviours and attitudes are shaped, evaluated and controlled in accordance with set standards of conduct formulated by parents as a high authority. Children's autonomy is disregarded because they are assigned household chores to impart to them a culture of hard work. Authoritarian parents do not value providing reasoning for the decisions taken on behalf of children (Baumrind, 1967). Lastly, permissive parents make few demands on their children for household responsibility and orderly behaviour. Otherwise, children are allowed to regulate their own behaviour. Permissive parents often attempt to avoid confrontation with their children, restrain from exercising control and do not encourage children to obey externally defined standards in the society (Baumrind, 1967).

Matejevic et al. (2014) used Baumrind (1967)'s theory of parenting style in their study on parents' involvement in school activities and adolescents' academic achievement in Serbia. This study was conducted among 100 mothers, 100 fathers and 100 adolescents in primary and high schools. Findings showed a gender discrepancy in terms of parenting style: mothers exhibited an authoritative parenting style, while fathers exhibited an authoritarian parenting style. The results also showed that fathers were not involved in school activities of their adolescent children but mothers were highly involved in those activities. Involvement of the mothers in school activities was associated with improved educational outcomes for the adolescent children. In summary, the authoritative parenting style was associated with higher involvement in school activities and academic success of adolescent children. Similar findings were reported in an earlier research by Glasgow et al. (1997) and Stevenson and Lee (1990), cited in O'Connor and Scott (2007). The reported findings might not be generalised to children of Asian immigrant parents. Seabra (2012), in her study on the Indian and Cape Verdean immigrant children and their educational outcomes, found that children from India who were controlled and followed strict rules concerning school assignments produced better results than both Portuguese and Cape Verdean students. This finding was surprising because Asian parenting is mostly considered as authoritarian in nature. Yet children subjected to this style of parenting achieved good academic results; besides, their Asian parents were also actively involved in the education of their children.

Jambunathan and Counselman (2002) in their study on parenting attitudes of Asian Indian mothers in the USA also reported that Indian parenting was generally authoritarian whereas European American parenting was authoritative. Furthermore, when comparing Asian Indian mothers in India and USA mothers, the same authors found that Asian Indian mothers in the USA used an authoritative parenting style implying that they had successfully adapted to the parenting culture of the host

country and they balanced it with their own traditional cultural expectations. However, the authors suggest that there was a need to be cautious in adopting the concepts of authoritarian, authoritative and permissive parenting styles in different cultural contexts. While authoritative parenting might be good in Western cultural contexts, authoritarian parenting can be appropriate in other cultural settings.

Methodological approach for data collection

This qualitative study was conducted among Nepalese immigrant parents in Lisbon, Portugal. Data for this study was collected through in-depth interviews with Nepalese immigrant parents. Keeping in mind the purpose of the study and the characteristic of the participants required, individuals were first approached through a key contact; these participants proposed other potential participants who met the selection criteria for this study. In particular, snowball sampling techniques were used to recruit participants for the study (Bryman, 2012). The selection criteria comprised the following:

— Being an immigrant from Nepal and living in Lisbon, Portugal.
— Having a child or children who immigrated (with the parent) to Portugal. The child according to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child is a person below 18 years.
— Both the parents and child or children having resided in Portugal for at least one year.

Because parents immigrated with their children, it was assumed that they had experienced culture, tradition and values, including parenting in both Nepal and Portugal. The sample universe for this study was the Lisbon Metropolitan Area in which approximately 79% of the total Nepalese immigrant population in Portugal live (SEF, 2014). The participants were from seven different areas in Lisbon, namely Rossio, Martim Moniz, Alameda, Anjos, Intendente, Alcantara and Campo Pequeno. A sample involving 10 participants representing 10 families was interviewed. In particular, in-depth interviews were conducted with five mothers and five fathers. In-depth interviews were conducted because they offered the opportunity to have direct interaction with the participants and to clarify and ask additional questions; as Kvale (1996: 1) stated, they enabled me to "try to understand something from the subjects' point of view... in their own words".

The language of communication during the interviews was Nepali which is the national language of Nepal. All the participants including the researcher were familiar with this language which enabled effective interviewing. The duration for the interviews ranged between 1 and 2 hours. The date, time and location for each interview were selected at the convenience of participants. Participation in this study was voluntary. Participants were informed that the collected information was to be kept confidential and pseudonyms were used in presenting findings to ensure participants' anonymity. Participants were also informed that they could

abstain from answering some questions if they felt uncomfortable with them. All the interviews were audio-recorded after obtaining permission from the participants. Data were analysed using content analysis. The data was reduced into concepts and categories that described the research phenomenon. The initial coding categories and sub-categories were determined based on Baumrind (1967)'s theory of parenting styles. Further categories were developed after reading the interview transcripts. The findings are discussed using data excerpts and making reference to the findings of previous researchers.

Main findings and their interpretation

Findings in the rest of this chapter are discussed under the following two main themes: i) responsiveness and demand focusing on the parenting style among Nepalese immigrants; and ii) transmission of Nepalese values and subsequent adjustments. The two themes are discussed in detail below.

Responsiveness and demand: parenting style among Nepalese immigrants

The responsiveness and demand paradigm associated with Baumrind's (1967) theory of parenting style enables researchers to assess whether parents are authoritative, authoritarian or permissive. To be categorised as adopting any of these styles depends on how high or low the parents are in terms of being responsive and demanding with their children. The three parameters used in this study to determine whether parents were high or low in responsiveness and demand are (i) methods of disciplining children, (ii) relationship with children and (iii) monitoring and decision-making. It was found that all the parents, especially mothers, presented reasons and explanations for the decisions reached concerning their children and were supportive of their children. It was also found that parents, especially mothers, shared experiences of closeness and feelings as well as spending quality time with children. These behaviours of parents, as Baumrind (1967) reported, suggest they were high on responsiveness. Similarly, with regard to the third parameter, it was found that almost all the parents (mostly fathers) monitored their children's performance in school, and set strict rules of conduct for them. Such strict rules of conduct included taking controlled amounts of food and drinks and not being allowed to wear particular clothes in public. The following quotation illustrates this point:

> The dressing culture here is very open. We tell her "you should not be doing this (wearing inappropriate clothes)". Maybe this is not a problem among Europeans. We tell her "not to eat this; not drink this". Regarding drinks [alcoholic drinks], we have to speak to her. The way you guide a child is how you will be perceived [by the Nepalese community in Lisbon]. [Prasanna, aged 39, father of a son and a daughter]

This account suggests that the quoted parent was high on control (Baumrind, 1967). This finding also shows that the Nepalese immigrant parents were highly

concerned about the safety of their children and supported them to ensure they followed rules, which were explained to them. Being strict with children was influenced by the participants' experiences in Portugal as the following quotation illustrates:

> Today, I saw a guy. He was with four other children who were very young, maybe between 15 and 17 years of age. They were smoking something, I showed this to my child, and I explained to him that "this is the reason why I cannot let children go out too often". [Rupak, aged 36, father of two sons]

In the context of this study, mothers were associated with caregiving, supporting and spending much time with their children (responsiveness) while fathers were associated with setting family rules and monitoring children (demand). Baumrind (1967) reported that the paradigm of high responsiveness and demand is affiliated with authoritative parenting where parents use reasoning and understand the importance of communicating with children as well as exhibiting a certain degree of control but ensure that their children are provided with explanation for decisions taken. It is evident from the above findings that Nepalese immigrant parents in Portugal exhibited an authoritative style of parenting.

This authoritative parenting style contrasts with the findings reported in previous research about the same population (Kim and Ge, 2000; Deepak, 2005; Inman et al., 2007; Rhee et al., 2003). These studies indicate that Asian parenting generally was inclined towards an authoritarian parenting style characterised by parents showing much control and less responsiveness towards their children. One possible reason for this difference might be because, as Remennick (2014) earlier reported, Nepalese immigrant parents in the context of this study had changed with time and become acculturated in Portugal. Besides, the high levels of formal education of the participants in this study suggest that they were likely to adapt easily to the culture of their host country. Moreover, half of the sample in this study had completed tertiary education; some participants had completed secondary education, one participant had completed primary level education, while one participant did not have formal education. Participants also reported that they were aware of negative consequences associated with the use of draconian disciplinary measures such as scolding, threatening and administering physical punishment that are often associated with Asian parents (Jambunathan and Counselman, 2002).

In their study, Jambunathan and Counselman (2002) found that Asian Indian mothers who were living in the United States exhibited an authoritative parenting style in comparison to mothers who lived in India, who exhibited an authoritarian parenting style. The possible explanation provided for the differing parenting styles among the Asian Indian mothers was that they had been influenced by the dominant American culture, which outlawed the use of an authoritarian parenting style. However, Haan (2012) reported that to better comprehend current practices, it was better to understand the interaction between practices brought along and those encountered in the new country. In the context of this study, various other factors, including the laws and norms of Portugal, and the support systems in the

host country may all have contributed to the changes in the parenting style of the Nepalese immigrant parents.

Another possible explanation for the practice of an authoritative parenting style by the Nepalese immigrant parents in Portugal could be the fact that many of them had lived in Portugal for many years, suggesting that acculturation had occurred. Apart from two participants who had lived in Portugal for three years, the rest of the participants had lived in Portugal for more than five years. Ochocka and Janzen's (2008) study on immigrant families living in Canada for three years showed that their parenting had gone through some degree of change due to various contributing factors including Canadian laws, their children's behaviour, interaction with society and the change in power relations between children and parents. These reasons seem applicable to the Nepalese immigrant parents in this study.

Other characteristics existed in terms of values that most of the Nepalese immigrant parents transmitted to their children, including parent-child interdependence and respect. These are related to the collectivistic culture of Asian societies (Markus and Kitayama, 1991). Baumrind (1967) reported that an authoritative parenting style is generally associated with an individualistic culture and an authoritarian parenting style is generally associated with a collectivistic culture. However, the collectivistic culture of Nepalese immigrant parents in this study did not carry along with it an authoritarian parenting style because it was evident that the parents exhibited considerable care, warmth and responsiveness to their children. Some of the parents reported that they monitored their children and enforced some strict rules, which their children had to follow. Moreover, they also reported that they applied strict rules of conduct to protect children from risks such as substance abuse, cohabitation and inappropriate dressing. Gorman (1998), in a study of Chinese immigrant mothers in the USA, indicated that Chinese mothers imposed restrictions on their children not to control but to protect them. Nepalese immigrant parents must have been similarly concerned about protecting rather than controlling their children and consequently displayed behaviour relevant to both the authoritative style and the authoritarian parenting styles (Baumrind, 1967).

Transmission of Nepalese values and subsequent adjustments

Respect for elders and parents, preservation of native culture, management of Western influence and parent-child interdependence were reported to influence the conduct of the participants in this study. Upholding these values demonstrates the deep rootedness of Asian values among Nepalese immigrant parents. Maiter and George (2003) argued that obedience to parental rules and respect were some of the values common in South Asian societies. For the Nepalese immigrant parents, it was important to instil a sense of respect among their children which they assumed was lacking in Western culture. Most of the participants in this study reported that they taught their children responsibility towards their parents as demonstrated in the following quotation:

Here, children do not respect their parents. They do what they wish to do without re-gard for what the parents want. Children leave their parents when they are 18 years old. I know of a culture here called casamento apartamento, which means before you get married you need to get an apartment and leave your parents' home. The woman demands that if you want to marry her you should leave your parents' home. In our society we do not leave our parents. When you marry your wife, she comes to your home and she has to love and respect your parents as you do. This is the culture that we have. [Subodh, aged 37, father of a daughter]

The perceived fear that children abandoned their parents before and upon getting married is common in the Nepalese culture because children are expected to take care of their parents in old age (Jennings et al., 2012). Nepalese immigrant parents in Portugal could have been worried that their children were learning a Western culture and thus were likely to abandon them in the future. Participants reported that they were alarmed when they saw elderly Portuguese people walking alone on streets and living alone in apartments. When referring to Portuguese culture, participants often used terms such as European and Western cultures interchange-ably. In contrast, they described their own culture as the Nepali culture, South Asian culture or Asian culture.

With regard to the fear of being eventually abandoned by their children in old age, one participant explained.

It is important to teach children about our culture. If we do not, after they are 18, they would say bye and leave and then for us life will be over. We do not have that culture. Parents have hope from their sons and daughters. Westerners do not have such kind of expectations but for us, we say now we look after them and later they will look after us. They come to visit them only when the parents are dead. We have to teach them about our culture. That is a big thing. My older son knows about this (taking responsi-bility for the parents when they grow old) but for the younger one, we need to teach him. We need to teach him the language. In case he does not learn, we have to send him to Nepal to teach him. If we do not send him to Nepal to learn these things, he will not look after us later. [Rupak, aged 36, father of two sons]

The challenge though, as the participants reported, could be the laws in Portugal, which allowed children to decide what they wanted to do when they turned 18. Some parents have anticipated this challenge because they reported that all they could do was to socialise their children in Nepalese values and norms and hope that their children would not abandon them in their old age. The participants also reported that they were concerned with preserving their cultural identity as mani-fested in their active participation in Nepalese festivals and not in Portuguese festi-vals. The following quotation illustrates this point:

We prioritise Nepali Culture. My daughters have friends who celebrate Christ-mas. It is ok if they celebrate with them (Portuguese), but when we have Dashain and Tihar (two of the biggest festivals in Hindu religion), we involve our children

and we give priority to our culture. [Shyam, aged 35, father of two daughters]

However, participants reported that their children enjoyed Christmas more than Dashain and Tihar because the former occurred in their children's holidays, which was not the case with the Nepalese festivals. Christmas was thus associated with opportunities for having much fun, which was not the case with the two Nepalese festivals mentioned.

Change in power relations between parents and their children was another factor that could influence transmission of values as explained in the quotation below.

> Our daughter knows more than we do; she is better at Portuguese than her father. She teaches her father, she reads his letters. And if we take our daughter to Serviço de Estrangeiros e Fronteiras, we feel relieved. Even in hospital, our daughter deals with it, we do not have to speak, so I do not have to be involved. [Ritu, aged 37, mother]

The child being referred to above was 14 years old and considered by her parents as more competent and better integrated in Portugal than they were. This child had lived in Portugal for 3 years and could speak Portuguese fluently, unlike her father who had lived in Portugal for more than 8 years. Besides, parents depended on their daughter to ensure they received services and care in Portugal. The parents' undue reliance on their daughter in this context had altered the parent-child power dynamics because of living in Portugal rather than in Nepal. Earlier on, Walsh et al. (2006) reported such a change in power relations involving parents and their children. Rapid integration of children in the new cultural system enabled them to negotiate with their parents in an egalitarian manner. For example, Nepalese immigrant parents gradually accepted what they considered a Portuguese norm of providing autonomy to children, a fact that they could not accept if they were in the position of dominancy as usually is the case in Nepal.

Conclusion

The findings from this study show that the parenting style theory by Baumrind (1967) did not fully explain the parenting behaviours of Nepalese immigrants in Portugal. Practices of these parents incorporated characteristics of both the authoritative and the authoritarian models of parenting (Baumrind, 1967). The parents were caring, supportive and gave logical explanations to their children; these were the characteristics of authoritative parenting, but at the same time they instilled values of parent-child interdependence and set strict rules of conduct for their children, this latter representing an authoritarian parenting style. The parents thought that their controlling behaviour towards their children did not demonstrate misuse of power or authority but love and concern for the latter's safety and well-being. Parenting among Nepalese immigrant parents was also influenced by the Nepali culture, which required them to transmit the values of respect, inter-dependence, educational achievements and preservation

of native culture. However, transmission of these values was sometimes constrained by factors such as Portuguese laws and norms and the children's own experiences in the host country. Many parents disapproved of the rights provided to the children after the age of 18, as they were worried about their children abandoning them in old age. The children's exposure to and mastery of the Portuguese culture and language meant they probably integrated faster than their parents. In turn, it reduced the power differentials between the parents and their children. Nepalese immigrant parents subsequently were adjusting their parenting styles in accordance with their emerging needs and those of their children while living in the diaspora.

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Chapter 3
Parenting experiences of Chinese immigrants in Norway

Hong Zhu[1]

Abstract This study examined parenting experiences of Chinese immigrants in Norway and was informed by the bioecological, acculturation and social capital models. These theoretical frameworks provided insights regarding how individual features and contextual factors together with acculturation operated collectively in reproducing, negotiating and modifying Chinese immigrants' parenting practices in Norway. The findings showed that being acculturated allowed Chinese immigrant parents to have multiple insights in order to examine the criteria constructed by the image of good parenting within specific contexts. However, the acculturation process itself also caused significant stress to Chinese immigrant parents associated with common challenges such as language-related barriers, peer pressure on parenting and acculturation gap between generations. The Chinese immigrant parents' social networks in this research were identified as mediators of parental stress and accelerators of parental acculturation. Policies that address bonding and bridging social networks of Chinese immigrant parents in Norway should ease migration- and acculturation-related stress and promote healthy parenting among Chinese immigrants.

Introduction

Building inclusive nations in the context of immigration is of timely importance worldwide. Achieving diverse and inclusive societies can be done through providing education and developing policies aimed at promoting equal opportunities, intercultural understanding and social inclusion for everyone, including immigrants and their descendants (United Nations, 2007). Immigration and acculturation entail processes of socio-economic, cultural and psychological transition (Berry, 2007). The distinct stresses that immigrant families face during such a transition include language-related barriers, diminished social capital, parental efficiency and confidence and efficiency in dealing with social institutions in host societies (Phinney and Ong 2007; Bornstein and Bohr 2011; FalZon et al., 2012; and Bean et al., 2012).

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This research examines stories of Chinese immigrant parents in Norway. In particular, there is an interest in understanding from a cross-cultural perspective how individual, contextual and acculturation factors affect parenting among Chinese immigrants and the perceived challenges and opportunities for these parents.

Chinese immigrant parents

Chinese immigrant parents have recently become the focus of public discourses due to the 'Tiger Mother' practice,[2] which states that harsh Chinese parenting practices are effective because they ensure children's academic success and instrumental competence (Time, 2011). A 'Tiger' parenting style is not unique and is widely found in Chinese families living in China and overseas. The ideologies and values behind such harsh parenting are derived from Confucianism,[3] an essential part of Chinese culture that has been passed on from one generation to another (Huang et al., 2003). In particular, primary Confucian values, such as hard work, discipline, filial piety and human malleability have defined and developed Chinese parenting. This is manifested in greater parental demand/control and high expectations for children's educational achievement (Wu et al., 2002; Xu et al., 2005; and Lin and Ho, 2009).

The Norwegian context for Chinese immigrants

In 2015, the total population of Chinese immigrants in Norway reached 9,491, showing an increase of 29.6% over the previous five years (Statistic Norway, 2015). Chinese immigrants are regarded as one of the fast-growing populations in Norway. Norway generally is a politically stable, safe, wealthy and welfare-oriented country in Europe that attracts a large number of Chinese and other immigrants (Brochmann and Kjeldstadli, 2008). Concepts of inclusion and equality have been viewed as paramount in Norwegian society (Horst et al., 2010; and Bratsberg et al., 2012), and the country's favourable integration policy has been ranked fourth in the world with a high score of 69 (Migrant Integration Policy Index, 2015).

However, the integration policy in Norway has been criticised for its implicit assimilation goals. Evidence shows that the Norwegian government deals with minorities' claims to the right of difference in, arguably, less satisfactory ways (Eriksen, 2013). Besides, ethnic discrimination still exists in the labour market (Eriksen, 2013), and language policy in schools is inconsistent (Baba and

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2   The Tiger mother's "strict parental style derived from her so-called Chinese upbringings have made Amy Chua, a second-generation of Chinese American, a center of attention" (Guo, 2013). Key to Chua's account is the notion that the harsh Chinese parental practice is effective because it is associated with children's academic success (Chua, 2011).

3   Confucianism, also known as Ruism, is an ethical and philosophical system. It is also perceived as a religion developed from the teachings of the Chinese philosopher Confucius (551-479 BCE). The core of Confucianism is humanistic, according to Herbert Fingarette's concept of "the secular as sacred". It is a religion that deconstructs the sacred-profane dichotomy regarding the secular real of human action as a manifestation of the sacred.

Dahl-Jørgensen, 2013). Many Norwegian education and social service professionals are challenged by their limited cultural knowledge and competence to meet the linguistic, cultural and integration needs from the increasing population of immigrants (Fuglerud and Engebrigtsen, 2006; OECD, 2009; and Eriksen, 2013).

Theoretical framework

The following theoretical frameworks informed this study: (i) the bio-ecological model, (ii) acculturation, and (iii) social capital.

The bioecological model

The widely-used bio-ecological model postulates that an individual is embedded in five nested systems, namely, micro-, meso-, exo-, macro-, and chrono- systems, "each inside the other like a set of Russian dolls" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979: 3). The model further states that individual features, contextual factors and change in time (referred to as acculturation in this research) influence beliefs and practices regarding parenting.

The theory of acculturation

In the context of migration studies, acculturation involves changes in the immigrants' population because of coming into contact with the mainstream culture of host societies (Berry, 2007). When individuals come into contact with a host culture, they usually develop four different acculturation strategies, namely integration, assimilation, separation and marginalisation.[4] This depends on their preferences for their home culture or the culture of their host society (Berry, 2007). Individual acculturation levels vary because of the influence of contextual and personal factors, which include one's culture, cultural differences of the home and host country and the host country's policies and attitudes related to immigrants. The individual factors that influence acculturation include age, gender, educational background, reason for migration, religious beliefs, etc. (Berry, 2007). This theory enabled the researcher to examine how Chinese immigrant parents adapted in the context of cultural differences with regard to the home and host country and the

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4   Integration occurs when immigrants continue to embrace their home country's cultural identity while accepting the dominant culture in the host country. Assimilation occurs when immigrants integrate and acquire a new culture without retaining their original one. Separation refers to individuals' insistence on maintaining their home cultural identity and trying to avoid contact with the culture of the host country, and marginalisation means that immigrants do not retain their original culture, and are not willing to engage with the dominant culture in their host country (Berry, 2007).

roles that Norway's socialisation agencies played in participants' assimilation or the maintenance of their cultural identity.

Bonding and bridging social capital

Social capital refers to the collective value of all social networks (Putnam, 2007). Immigration often results in the decrease of affected individual and families' social capital (e.g. Krissman, 2005; and Walseth, 2008). There is, thus, a growing understanding that social integration of immigrants requires the constant maintenance and regeneration of social capital; building supportive social networks in particular is critical to the integration of immigrants into their host societies (Putnam, 2007). Social capital can be categorised as: (i) homogeneous relations/ties among individuals with a similar background or interests and (ii) heterogeneous relation/ties, which cross boundaries of ethnicities, class and minority status. Bonding and bridging social capital is equally essential and usually found in co-existence (Putnam, 2007). Bonding and bridging social capital particularly facilitated the researcher in assessing how the Norwegian socialisation agencies served as support systems for Chinese immigrant parents in Norway.

Methodology

The various methods and procedures used in selecting participants, collecting and analysing data and the ethical values adhered to during the course of this study are discussed in this section of the chapter. In particular, narrative inquiry involving in-depth interviews was chosen as the study design. Narrative inquiry is beneficial when a researcher is interested in documenting individual stories and the meanings underlying the constructed stories (Riessman, 2008).

Five parents from three Chinese families who were permanent residents in Rogaland, Norway were sampled for this study. These families were approached and recruited through snowball sampling techniques.

The first selection criterion for participants was based on all parents who were the first generation of immigrants, that is, they were born and grew up in China, spoke Chinese as their mother tongue and immigrated to Europe or Norway when they were already adults. The second was Chinese families with children who had attended or were attending Norwegian kindergarten or schools; while the third was based on participants representing as much variation as possible based on factors such as age, residential period in Norway, socio-economic status and level of education.

To collect the data, two separate interviews with each participant lasting about an hour and a half were conducted. In the first interview, the researcher elicited participants' narratives by asking them to tell stories related to their immigration, parenting and family life and children's schooling in Norway. The second interview with each participant was conducted within three days after the first interview to

gather additional anecdotes. The interval between two interviews offered participants the opportunity to provide further details concerning the study topics.

All the interviews were conducted in Chinese; they were audio-recorded, transcribed, and summarised, and then translated into English. Data analysis involved the following stages: (i) building an individual narrative sketch which includes events, characters and structure of the narratives, (ii) identifying the critical events of each participant's stories, (iii) case-focused narrative analysis and (iv) cross-case content analysis. In case-focused analysis, a family narrative script was constructed. Stories from participants were retold in the form of autobiography in the narrators' own voices. Those stories do not reflect individual original narrative completeness; instead, only relevant plots/critical events were selected. In cross-case content analysis, similarities and differences across families' stories were identified and analysed to form research themes. To ensure ethical conduct during the course of this study, the following strategies were adopted: first, by ensuring that all participants were fully aware of the purpose, methods, possible risks and potential uses of the study by requesting them to review and then sign the informed consent form. The second strategy entailed preserving and respecting respondents' confidentiality and anonymity by using pseudonyms, and removing all personal identification details such as respondents' workplaces, as well as keeping the collected data in a secure location. The third strategy involved developing and using an interview guide to avoid cultural insensitive questions in order to minimise any adverse influence upon participants.

Case-focused narrative analysis

The following subsection presents a case-focused narrative analysis involving three cases that were constructed from the data.

Case Family A

Family A has three members, namely Qu, the mother, who is 38 years old; Fan, the father, aged 53; and Junior, who is 10 years old. Qu and Fan were born and grew up in Hong Kong, China, and immigrated to Norway in their twenties. Qu is now an employed cello performer and Fan runs a restaurant business. Below are some of the selected stories from Qu's and Fan's narratives.

> I had doubts before regarding immigration to Norway after marrying Fan. I loved my profession so much and I was afraid that I could not continue with it in Norway. Luckily, after four months of arrival in Norway, I got my current position. Fan's friends made most credits of this, by linking me to different clubs and orchestras. My working environment is incredibly international.
>
> I agree with the Norwegian ways of raising children: caring, encouraging and giving unconditional love. However, I also believe that parental control, governance, or you

could say interference, are very necessary. When little Junior falls down, for instance, we do not go to hug and comfort him. We let and encourage him to stand up by himself first.

Junior is always arguing with me, asking questions regarding why I do not allow him to eat on the bed or with TV on, why he needs to clean the table after meals, and why unlike his peers, he needs to study Mandarin. I usually explain the reasons patiently and let him understand that he lives in our home and that he should respect our rules (Qu).

Qu behaves like most Norwegian parents; she kisses Junior all the time and tells him how much she loves him.

By contrast, I largely behave like traditional Chinese parents, who seldom express love directly. At the beginning, I barely kissed and hugged Junior because I used to believe that a father should be tough and authoritative. Qu and other Norwegian friends were concerned about my behaviour for a long time until I realised how stupid I was. My behaviour brought nothing but coldness to my son…

Qu has many performance opportunities around Europe every year. I sometimes brought Junior to join her in different cities. When Qu spent her time at hotels while practicing, I explored new places with Junior. We visited different museums, zoos, parks and aquariums; we tried different foods, and we even made new friends. Both of us really like this father-son adventure. We have learned a lot and we love each other's company (Fan).

Qu and Fan's stories demonstrate the complexity of relationships between personal history, acculturation and social networks, and their collective influence on parental behaviour. Initially, by growing up and receiving education in Hong Kong, the British colony, Qu and Fan acquired abundant cultural knowledge about the global western, which later prepared the couple to better navigate Norwegian cognition after immigration. Fluency in English, for example, successfully supported the couple in learning Norwegian, integrating into the labour market system and bonding with natives and other cross-ethnic networks.

The term integration simply describes the couple's acculturation level-learning from both home and host cultures (Berry, 2007). Because of exposure to broader Norwegian systems, Qu and Fan had the opportunity to re-evaluate their understanding of good parenting within different contexts. Their parental practices, therefore, were constantly modified because of regular cultural learning and evaluation. Being integrated supported Qu and Fan to eventually develop a hybrid parenting style that combined features from Chinese families (high parental control) with those from the Norwegian society (expression of parental warmth and responsiveness) (Chua, 2011; and Juang et al., 2012).

Social networks in Family A have a reciprocal influence on parental acculturation. As Qu indicated, she successfully participated in the Norwegian labour

market system after immigration with support from her family social networks. Full-time employment further strengthened and expanded Qu's social capital, bringing extended social support to the family ecology and accelerating the speed of her acculturation in Norwegian society.

Case Family B

Family B involves five members, namely Hui, a mother of 45 years of age; Zhang, a father aged 48; two daughters, Linda and Yun, aged 18 and 16, respectively; and a son, Gi, who is 12 years old. Hui grew up in Guangzhou, China and migrated to the United Kingdom for tertiary education in her early twenties. She met Zhang in the UK. Zhang was born in Fujian, China, and migrated to the UK with his family during his early adulthood. Zhang ran a small restaurant when the young couple married. To help the husband's business, Hui worked as the manager of Zhang's restaurant after graduating from her studies. In 2005, the couple migrated to Norway with their three children. The family now operates a hospitality business in Rogaland, Norway. Linda enrolled for college education last year while her two siblings are in the 12th and 8th grades at local schools in Norway. The narrative below indicates the most significant issues obtained from interviews with Hui and Zhang.

> When I conceived Linda, I was not ready to become a mother. My parents-in-law who lived quite close offered me much practical support. However, to be honest, they were very demanding which stressed me too much. As is the case with many closed-minded Chinese of the old generation, they wanted us to produce a son for the family. After giving birth to my second daughter, my parents-in-law persuaded me to keep trying to produce a son. My mother-in-law even bought me some Chinese traditional medicine, which, according to the local Chinese quack, could help me to conceive a boy.

> After four years, we got Gi, our son. My in-laws were extremely excited and started interfering in our lives. They insisted that I should breastfeed Gi for two years. We should only speak Chinese in front of Gi because bilingualism, according to them, would hinder the baby's brain development. They required to see Gi almost every day. At times when we were not ready for visitors, they would just show up in front of our door. More than once, I tried to argue with them about the way they treated us and my parents-in-law got angry with us. My father-in-law one day coldly informed me that 'Gi belongs to the Zhang family, and if I cannot accept that, I should leave (Hui)'.

> With some friend's help, we eventually left my parents, moved here (Norway) and started a new life. Of course, we had a huge fight with my parents who could not accept that we were leaving them in the UK. My father told me that if I moved, I would never receive any family support, including inheritance. We do not care about inheritance at all; we finally escaped.

> Here (in Norway), I actually spend more time with my children. In the UK, I stayed at our restaurant as demanded by my father. However, here in Norway, I have hired an experienced manager to take care of my business and got much time to spend with my family (Zhang).

Consistent with findings reported in previous studies, Hui and Zhang described a contradictory role of extended family members, especially grandparents, in relation to the migrants' parental practices in a host country (e.g. Liu and Lin, 1999; Respler-Herma et al., 2012). Emotional and practical support coming from grandparents initially helped the interviewed parents to cope with childrearing. However, undue interference from grandparents also undermined the parents' autonomy with regard to parenting and precipitated parenting stress.

As earlier mentioned, filial piety is a dominant cultural element in China, which is also widely exhibited among Chinese immigrants overseas (Lin and Ho, 2009). Filial teaching requires children to show undue respect to their parents and parents-in-law. Such respect is manifested in demonstrating conditional love and obedience to parents and parents-in-law (Wu et al., 2012). Zhang's parents in the story are a typical manifestation of filial piety, which required the young couple to submit to the authority of elders including parents. Stories by Hui and Zhang show that grandparents regularly use filial discourses in their daily conversation, which include *xiang fu jiao zi*. In the context of filial discourse, the main responsibility of a woman is to support her husband and raise the children and *bu xiao you san, wu hou wei da,*the most unfilial thing is failure to deliver a grandson). Such discourses consistently reinforced the grandparents' filial power in a prejudicial manner with regard to the interviewed couple's decisions concerning conceiving, parenting and dealing with other personal and family matters.

Case Family C

Case family C comprises four family members, namely Lin, a mother who is 32 years old; Wang, a father aged 34; their two sons, Kim, who is 12 years old and Jim, who is 9 years old. The parents were born and grew up in Shanghai, China. Wang migrated to Norway in 2007 for his doctoral studies while Lin and their two sons followed a year later for family union. Wang currently works as an engineer while Lin is a full-time homemaker. In the subsequent paragraphs, I present the most critical events of Lin's stories. The perspective of the father (Wang) in this family is missing because he did not participate in the study due to personal reasons.

> I am the only child in my family and used to receive much support from my parents in China. The lack of practical support from my parents makes it hard for me to raise my two young children. Besides, Wang has started criticising very much how I am taking care of our children… One time I was trying to argue with him, blaming him for not spending even a single minute on our children's education and he became furious. He started kicking our bookshelves and yelling at me as if he were a monster.

Wang treats the boys very strictly and is so demanding, especially of Kim. One time Kim lied that he had completed his homework and such a trivial act caused my husband to threaten our son so much that he could not stop crying. Kim's tears made the situation worse because Wang always requires Kim to be brave. I saw Wang slapping Kim on the head and yelling, 'stop crying, you are such a useless girl'.

I have shared my frustration with Chinese friends in Norway who often help me with childcare. They felt bad for Kim and me but they also reassured me that Wang's behaviour was normal. Indeed, they criticised me for not realising how good Wang is: highly educated, intelligent, hard-working and honest.

Eventually, I went to see a professional at school (psychologist) who immediately made comments after hearing my stories about Wang. He said that I was too submissive to his abusive behaviour, which is unacceptable in Norway. I was shocked by this professional's quick conclusion regarding my conduct because he did not know my husband at all. I personally did not think Wang was abusive, but just too strict and a bit aggressive sometimes. However, I am indeed worried about Kim's aggressive behaviour, which might be influenced by that of his father. I saw several times when Kim yelled at Jim using the exact words Wang uses (Lin).

In Family C, Lin, the mother highlighted the challenge associated with navigating the value systems between Chinese and Norwegian cultures, and how this further caused constrained choices and additional parental stress. Because of the lack of support from the extended family and broader social networks, Lin faced difficulties in making efficient and appropriate decisions in response to her husband's abusive behaviour towards their son.

Patriarchal Chinese culture views men as breadwinners; therefore, the father's role in the family is generally described as dominant while the mother's role is submissive (Wu et al., 2012). Immigration to Norway in the context of this study had failed to change the image of a mother as submissive in Lin's case. The stereotype was consistently reinforced by Lin's frequent interaction with her Chinese friends who rationalised Wang's aggressive behaviour.

The contact with their children's school played a protective role in promoting appropriate parenting behaviour within the Norwegian context. It also helped Lin to increase her knowledge and awareness of social resources and the usage of public assistance. However, the lack of cultural awareness and the parenting behaviour of Lin and her husband might be easily misunderstood and judged by professions from the educational system or other services. Such situation contributed to Lin's additional acculturative pressures to make a significant change to deal with family relationship and childrearing issues in line with the Norwegian standards.

Cross-case content analysis

After analysing stories from the three families, the following themes emerged and provide a comprehensive description of the immigrant parental practices in Norway. First, participants' parental beliefs and behaviours in Norway were a result of their interaction with multiple factors at three main levels of their ecological system: personal factors (characteristics), contextual factors, and acculturation (Figure 1). Individual differences existing in the interaction with factors defined in the family's ecological system can lead to the variety of parental practices (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). Findings in this study suggest that parenting experiences of Chinese immigrants in Norway are influenced by multiple factors and they should be understood by assessing several determinants other than considering each factor singly.
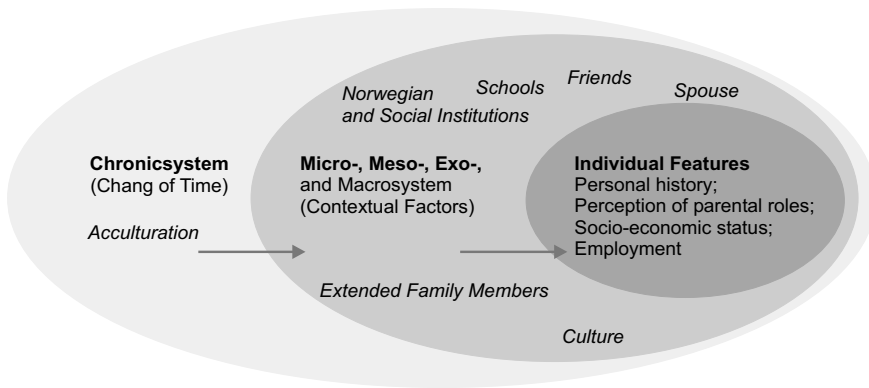
Figure 3.1   Ecological System of Case Families

Secondly, being acculturated allowed Chinese immigrant parents to adapt effectively in Norway and it provided individuals with multiple insights to evaluate the concept of good parenting in both Chinese and Norwegian cultural contexts. However, the acculturation process also brought the interviewed Chinese parents additional pressures stemming from common challenges such as language-related barriers and acculturation gap between the old and young immigrant generations.

For example, the mother in Family A mentioned that life in Norway at the beginning 'is not easy as thought' (Lin). When she struggled with pressures imposed by immigration and acculturation, it became a challenge for her to consider meeting their children's needs as a top priority for the family. Although the Chinese immigrant parents desired to satisfy their children's needs, they experienced significant loss in their parental effectiveness, for example, when interacting with school authorities.

> My three children and I came to this country without [knowledge of] a single Norwegian word. I know my children faced frustration at school. They actually spoke good English; however, teachers refused to speak with them in other languages to encourage my children to learn Norwegian. I think this was too harsh because it made kids nervous and less confident. I applied to serve as a volunteer in my daughter's classroom to help her settle in the school but I was rejected by the school leadership on grounds that I was poor in Norwegian (Hui).

Evidence from this study suggests that the difference in acculturation between immigrant parents and their children can raise intergenerational tensions and conflicts in families (Costigan and Su, 2008; Benner and Kim, 2010). This phenomenon is evident in the case of Family B. There was an acculturation gap between the immigrant grandparents, who maintained tradition after migration and wanted to inculcate ethnic beliefs in their offspring, and the interviewed parents, who are more acculturated because they routinely interacted with their host society's socialisation agencies, e.g. at the workplace. However, being acculturated allowed the couple to build an understanding relationship with their children who grew up within Norwegian society and acquired much of their host country's cultural cognition.

> Our second daughter, Yun, had a troubled adolescence. She often escaped from school and played crazy hardcore music with her friends. She dressed up edgy and had many tattoos and piercings. She started smoking, drinking; in fact, one time, we caught her using drugs (marijuana). Yun's behaviour really shocked us at the beginning. However, we gradually realised that there were worse cases in the community. Teenagers are always troubled. Like Yun, most girls and boys here are seeking a way to express themselves. They just need more attention and acceptance (Zhang).

Finally, social support received from friends, communities, schools and other social agents were seen by immigrant parents as mediating parental stress and accelerating acculturation. A positive relationship with those supportive social networks linked participants with more knowledge, opportunities and support, which in return promoted great acculturation and healthier parenting.

> I have the best doctor here who has been supporting me and offering me much help. He always comforts me during my regular pregnancy checks, making jokes all the time to ease anxiety. He eventually became our good friend. After giving birth, I returned to my busy working life immediately. Sometimes we have to travel a lot, and my husband takes more responsibility for caring for our children. I felt guilty most times when I left home. I am not a typical good mother in the view of most Chinese people. I cannot cook for my son, teach him anything apart from classical music, and I even fail to find much time to be with him. One time, both Fan and Junior got sick, but I could not stay at home to take care of them because I had two performances in a row. Luckily, in the end, my doctor helped me out (Qu).

Implications

The individual parental stories revealed in this research provide rich examples regarding parenting experiences of Chinese immigrants in Norway for professionals such as social workers and teachers. With the knowledge generated from this study, social work practitioners should validate the positive perspectives concerning raising children constructed within Chinese culture, while supporting immigrant families to identify potential difficulties and challenges in relation to childrearing in the Norwegian culture. The findings also highlight the important role of social networks in supporting Chinese immigrants' acculturation and parenting. Therefore, policies that address bonding and bridging social capital of the studied population should target alleviating migration- and acculturation-related stress. Specifically, bonding social capital implies the need to strengthen Chinese immigrants' pre-existing networks in Norway, e.g. supporting ethnic organisations. Bridging social capital implies the need to encourage minority groups to go beyond their preoccupation with common bonds and engage in building cross-cultural relationships, for example, supporting interest-oriented clubs at community and school level (see Figure 2).
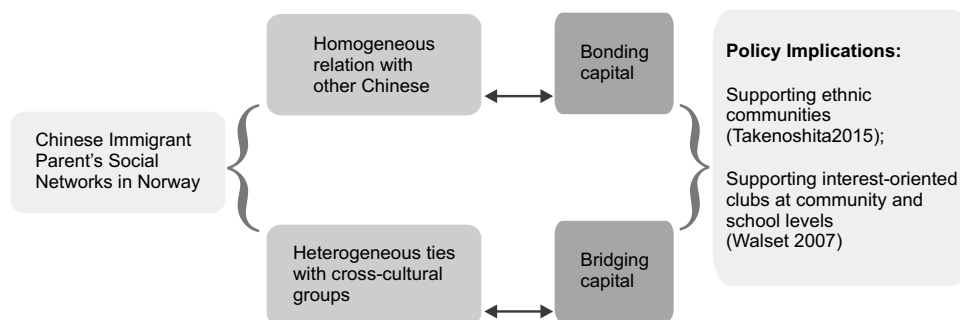
Figure 3.2   Strengthening Chinese Immigrant Parents' Social Networks in Norway

Conclusion

Through the narrative inquiry involving five Chinese immigrant parents from three individual families in Norway, this research revealed respondents' stories concerning parenting in the diaspora. The bio-ecological, acculturation and social capital models provided the overarching theoretical frameworks to facilitate understanding of how individual features, contextual factors and acculturation operated collectively in reproducing, negotiating and modifying Chinese immigrants' beliefs and behaviour concerning parenting. The findings showed that being

acculturated allowed parents to have multiple insights in assessing the meaning of good parenting within specific contexts. However, the acculturation process itself caused significant stress among the Chinese immigrant parents attributed to such factors as language-related barriers and acculturation gap between generations. The participants' social network served as both mediators of parental stress and accelerators of parental acculturation. Policies that address bonding and bridging social capital in Norway should address migration- and acculturation-related stress to encourage healthy parenting among Chinese immigrants.

The findings discussed above were generated from a relatively small sample and thus cannot be used to generalise all immigrant parents in Norway. In addition, during narrative interviews, the researcher encouraged participants to talk and freely reveal their narratives. The problem linked with this strategy is that data collected were decentralised, disorganised, and lacking a specific perspective. However, considerable effort was made to piece the information collected into holistic narratives to represent the voices of the participants. Despite these acknowledged study limitations, the findings provide invaluable insights into the experiences of parenting among Chinese immigrants in Norway.

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Chapter 4

Perspectives of child protection professionals on their role in parenting among immigrants in Gothenburg

Lilian Amankwa[1]

Abstract This study documented the role of child protection professionals in parenting among immigrants in Gothenburg, Sweden. It also explored parenting expectations of child protection professionals, difficulties faced by immigrant parents and the support provided to enhance parenting among immigrant parents. A qualitative approach was employed, involving seven child protection professionals who were selected using snowball sampling techniques. Of these professionals, five were from the social services and two from a resource centre. Data were collected using face-to-face interviews and analysed using the thematic analysis method. Findings indicate that two groups of professionals from the institutions studied collaborated in protecting and promoting children's well-being. By operating from varied perspectives, they played investigative and care roles, which are crucial to child protection. The professionals described personal expectations regarding "good parenting" as showing love, handling disagreement and being committed to serving children. These expectations reflect recognition of new conceptions of childhood that require application of an authoritative parenting style that seldom attracts contact with the child protection system. Three categories of parental challenges, two of which are common to both Swedish and immigrant parents and a category that was specific to immigrant parents were reported. The services provided met the general needs of both Swedish and immigrant parents, with, however, minimal consideration for immigrant-specific needs. The provision of generalised services to both the Swedish and immigrant parents is consistent with the orientation of the child protection professionals which is summarised as not "seeing difference" but addressing "general needs". The study recommends that services provided to parents should be reviewed with specific interest that targets the unique needs of immigrant parents and their children in Sweden.

Introduction

This study documented the role of child protection professionals in parenting among immigrants in Gothenburg, Sweden. It explored expectations of parenting among child protection professionals, and examined perceptions of child protection professionals regarding challenges which immigrants faced in parenting. This was aimed at assessing the ways child in which child protection professionals supported

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immigrant parents to raise children in their expected manner in Gothenburg. The study was motivated by earlier research that reported that Sweden experienced extensive immigration to the extent that immigrants constituted over 12 percent of the total population (Höjer, 2009). Moreover, this already high number of immigrants was projected to increase over the coming years. Furthermore, immigrant children were overrepresented in the out-of-home care in Sweden (Johansson, 2013), depicting frequent involvement of immigrant families with the child protection services. Yet, it was unclear how the child protection professionals perceived their role in supporting immigrants in raising their children to the expected care standards in Sweden. Therefore, the study aimed at contributing to a clear understanding of issues pertaining to the role of child protection professionals in working with immigrant parents in Gothenburg, Sweden.

Main authors and theoretical framework

This section presents a review of the literature on conceptions of childhood, parentification and presentation of the theoretical framework that informed this study.

Conceptions of childhood

Since the early 1980s, researchers have developed values that inform stipulations in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), the 12th and 13th articles of which outline children's rights to participation. These values have informed arguments for seeing children as 'being' and not 'becoming', acknowledging their agency and competences, recognising children's perspectives and voices in important issues concerning them, while at the same time promoting their best interests. The adoption of these values in research and practice reflect a paradigm shift in conceptualisations of childhood as a social and cultural phenomenon while acknowledging structural constraints that influence childhood. The shift involves different processes with different goals, happening in different contexts and affecting different adult-child relationships (Moses, 2008). Such happenings are important to discussions on parenting styles and child development, as societal conceptions about children and childhood define the conditions which societies create for children and how individuals respond accordingly (Nordenfors, 2012). In addition, these conceptions also produce different childhoods, varied public provisions for children, different ways of working with them (participatory or not) and power relations between children and adults (Moss and Petrie, 2002; Nordenfors, 2012). Considering that people's awareness of their conceptions makes them cautious of how their actions affect children (Nordenfors, 2012), it is important for professionals to understand motivations behind parenting styles and practices among immigrant parents, as specific practices are expected of parents. Finally, immigrant parents' understanding of conceptions of childhood in the host country leads to an appreciation of existing child protection processes.

Parentification

Garber (2011) refers to parentification as pathological parent-child role changes which often happen in the context of divorce. Whether parentification involves parent-to-child or child-to-parent exchanges, it can compromise the child's health and development. Most parentification models discuss universal elements such as a child assuming a parental role, role reversal and a disturbance in generational boundaries (Minuchin et al., 1967) cited in Hooper (2007). Garber (2011) explained parentification as a phenomenon that persisted among vulnerable groups such as immigrant families, chronically ill individuals, profoundly depressed and substance-dependent parents who sometimes lose sight of their responsibilities. Some researchers argue that parentification affects child development regardless of prevailing personal or social factors or the nature of exchange, i.e. parent-to-child or child-to-to parent role. The concept of parentification is important to this study because it helped to analyse processes that led to parent-child role changes among immigrants and how parents were helped to manage them. This was important because the immigrant parents interviewed were often socialised in societies where collective responsibility for individuals was the norm. For example, younger children were taken care of by older ones in the absence of parents (Lewig et al., 2010).

Theoretical framework

The study adopted the ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) and stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984). The ecological systems theory introduced context, a crucial consideration for stakeholders (especially child protection professionals, parents and children) because evidence shows that environmental factors influence parenting styles of immigrants. The theory explains a progressive interaction throughout the lifespan of a developing person and the changing environment. The interaction process is often facilitated by the relationships existing between the immediate (family) and distal environments (child protection system and school) in which the developing person lives. Furthermore, stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984) addresses morals and values in organisational management. In this theory, managers identify stakeholders who have special interests in a company and who are willing to contribute to its accomplishments. They then strategise to promote those interests (Brower & Mahajan, 2013) and resolve the 'co-operational problems' between crucial partners considering that conflicts harm the company while smooth cooperation benefits all parties involved (Tullberg, 2013). Tullberg (2013) categorises stakeholders as influencers ('power holders') and claimants; the former comprise government (child protection system), non-governmental organisations, media, etc., which might have weak ties with children but exert powerful control over them. On the other hand, claimants (parents) have close ties and are legitimately required to contribute to the welfare of their children but often wield less power and sometimes suffer victimisation by actions of their children (Keler, 2002 [in Tullberg, 2013]).

Methodological Approach

A qualitative research approach was adopted in conducting this study. Seven CP professionals were selected to participate in the study by means of a snowball sampling technique. In-depth interviews were conducted with the selected participants with the aim of generating a detailed and nuanced understanding of the role of child protection professionals in parenting among immigrants. Such a method of data collection according to Kvale (1996) enables researchers to know how people understand their worlds. Moreover, personal and detailed narratives were collected from the participants. In particular, of the seven child protection professionals who were interviewed, five were selected from the social services and two were from a resource centre. The resource centre provided care services including family and couple therapy, reflective counselling and contacts with parents and families. All the selected participants had spent at least six months working with immigrant parents in Sweden. Enrolling participants was based on theoretical sampling (Bryman, 2012). Data collected from the interviews were sufficient for the analytical purposes of this study as they facilitated a within-case and cross-case analysis (Sandelowski, 1995). A thematic analysis of the collected data was conducted and it involved extracting distinguishing themes between and within transcripts (Bryman, 2012). A thorough examination of the transcripts helped in identifying repetitions, similarities and differences, which were cues for determining the emerging categories and themes.

Findings and discussion

Presentation and discussion of key findings are done in the rest of this section according to the themes that emerged from the data.

All started with parents' involvement with the child protection service

Two groups of child protection professionals, working with the social services and the resource centre reported they approached their work differently but collaborated to protect children. These professionals often worked with immigrant families parenting children whose ages ranged from less than one to sixteen years. Involvement with the child protection system was either voluntary or involuntary. Individuals who approached the social services or the resource centre for help in solving parenting problems received voluntary family services. Such problems ranged from parent-child conflicts and communication challenges to teenage children's involvement with criminality. In addition, involuntary or coercive involvement occurred when professionals such as teachers, doctors and dentists suspected the possibility of child abuse and cases of neglect and referred the affected parents to obtain help from the child protection professionals. In the context of coercive involvement, cases reported in schools ranked highest, followed by cases reported in hospitals, dental facilities, by the police and in prisons. Similarly,

concerned citizens suspecting child abuse or neglect at times reported problematic home situations that led immigrant parents to be involved with the child protection system. Following a formal report by mandatory reporters or concerned citizens, a four-month investigation was conducted by the social services professionals. It aimed at substantiating claims of abuse and neglect. The investigation involved frequent meetings with parents, professionals at the resource centre and other relevant institutions. The resource centre usually provided family therapy to clients. Narratives of the professionals indicated that although consultations with children were relevant for making decisions affecting them, it was less evident in practice. Participants reported the involvement of children but did not state emphatically whether views of the children informed decisions taken or services provided to them and their families. However, the nature of involvement with the child protection system, whether voluntary or involuntary had little influence on the kind of support provided to parents. According to the participants, all families were provided with "needs-based" support as long as there was evidence of legal standards for child maltreatment or case closure in unsubstantiated cases. Participants reported that they expected good parenting to involve showing love, handling disagreements and showing commitment to serving children. These expectations reflect the orientations of the new conceptions of childhood while practising them demonstrated authoritative parenting. Authoritative parenting in the context of this study referred to the exhibition of good practice and style of parenting that manifested in not being in contact with the child protection system.

Participants reported three categories of parental challenges. Two categories of these challenges applied to both Swedish and immigrant parents: (i) difficulty in meeting high parenting standards and (ii) relational challenges. The third category involved individual and structural challenges; this applied specifically to immigrant parents. In general, the child protection professionals were conscious of three categories of challenges faced by parents. Although immigrant parents experienced specific and general challenges, services tailored to them were limited to only language and cultural interpretation. This anomaly was attributed to the view that child protection professionals were not allowed "to see differences but needs" of all parents. As a result, they provided solutions to individual parents and families instead of addressing structural challenges vis-à-vis individual challenges. The child protection professionals performed important roles in parenting such as diagnosing problems faced by families and children, assessing family needs and providing services as determined by their assessment. They also educated parents about acceptable parenting practices and provided information about available resources. However, the special needs of immigrant parents should be considered in order to provide them with appropriate services.

A review of perspectives of the child protection professionals on the needs and services provided to parents in general and immigrant parents in particular is necessary for addressing those that are specific to immigrant parents and their children.

Good parenting

The child protection professionals expected immigrant parents to meet the following parenting standards in Sweden: (i) expressing love through words and action, (ii) communicating disagreements without "using violence", (iii) maintaining emotional connection, and (iv) interacting with important systems in children's lives. These expectations are also consistent with Baumrind's authoritative parenting. The authoritative parenting style values disciplined conformity; it affirms autonomy, explains why rules should be obeyed and encourages verbal dialogue. According to Brower and Mahajan (2013), the authoritative parenting style is adopted by many parents in developed countries. Ramaekers and Suissa (2012) have argued that "looking at each child as individual and allowing opportunities for development" is fundamental to this style of parenting. The authors also stated that practising an authoritative parenting style is beneficial to both parents and children. The interactions that occur between parents and children and the use of rewards help parents to manage their expectations while grooming children into well-balanced individuals with effective communication skills (Ramaekers and Suissa, 2012: 96). Contrary to this position, a study by Renzaho, Green, Mellor and Swinburn (2011) found that a particular parenting style also referred to as "African parenting" persisted among immigrants living in Australia. These parents reinforced obedience and expectations, scrutinised children's behaviour and environment closely while using discipline and rewards; some of which inhibited the rights to autonomy emphasised by the UNCR (Johansson, 2013). This "African parenting" practice has a positive impact on children because it instils communal values in them. However, its elements such as corporal punishment often contradict parenting expectations in developed countries such as those expressed by the child protection professionals in this study. This inconsistency resulting from conflicts between pre-migration values and values of the host country remains a challenge for parents and is likely to attract child protection notifications. The identification of these challenges presupposes that measures addressing these inconsistencies are needed to prevent or mitigate immigrant parents' involvement with the child protection system in Sweden.

     The accounts discussed above somewhat reflected a gap in the expectations of the child protection professionals regarding showing love and what some parents actually did or thought they should do. This is a gap that may be enforcing professionals' conceptions of the child as "being" and not "becoming", resulting from their exposure to social work education in Sweden or the individualists' and child protection legislation guiding practice in Sweden (which immigrants parents may be unfamiliar with). These conceptions of childhood which are acceptable to the child protection professionals contradict the pre-migration beliefs and customs influencing child-rearing practices among immigrant parents. Therefore, it is important to identify contradictory beliefs within the macrosystem which possibly influence parenting practices in the microsystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1994) and address them through parenting programmes. Furthermore, expectations of child protection professionals seem to depict what Ramaekers and Suissa (2012) refer to as the 'third persons'' perception about parenting, which inadvertently differs

from what the 'first person' involved in a direct parent-child relation experiences. What the professionals thought immigrant parents needed from a third person's perspective (providing love, warmth and protection) could differ from what parents believed was good parenting that they aspired to provide to their children (Ramaekers and Suissa, 2012: 69). In the midst of these contradictory perceptions, parents who demonstrated love differently could miss the mark of 'good parents'. Therefore, opportunities for the child protection professionals to learn about different cultures and immigrants to also understand parenting in the new culture, not only theoretically but practically, may be helpful in improving the all-important parenting practices.

New conceptions of childhood

Expectations of child protection professionals regarding handling disagreement through non-violent communication and children being perceived as "victims of crime" reflected the influence of the new conceptions of childhood. Participants in this study perceived the need for promoting children's rights and seeing them as social beings with competent statuses needing participatory roles in making decisions that affected them. Therefore, they expected parents to engage them (considering the children's age) through dialogue and reasoning because of the children's presumed competency in understanding situations. Participation of children in decision-making was important and the child protection professionals were accordingly mandated to encourage parents to act in the best interest of the child (Johansson, 2013). Moreover, the best interest of the child could only be achieved when children's perspectives were considered in decision-making on matters that affected them. However, the issue was whether parents held similar conceptions to those of the child protection professionals regarding childhood. If immigrant parents did not, they were likely to experience challenges in the way they treated children as expected by the child protection professionals. This was because the different perceptions of childhood influenced differently how the children were treated (Moss and Petrie, 2002 [in Nordenfors, 2012]). Furthermore, immigrant parents' conceptions of children as vulnerable and in need of protection inevitably existed in Sweden and most children were dependent on adult caregivers (Johansson, 2013). These conceptions of children raise questions as to whether the child protection professionals have measures of dealing with the challenges arising from the mismatch between their own perspectives and those of the immigrant parents regarding childhood and parenting.

Parentification

Participants in this study reported that some immigrant children misinformed their parents about societal rules in Sweden. Children "tell parents that Swedish children are allowed to stay out at night and sometimes threaten to call social services" when parents fail to agree with them on some rules. Being threatened by children makes parents feel powerless and creates conflicts between them and

their children. The threats used by children stem from the negative perceptions concerning the role of the child protection professionals. Further research is needed regarding the role of the child protection professionals, cooperative roles of citizens in child protection and practical ways of dealing with the negative impressions of the social services. Perceiving the social services in general and child protection in particular as a threat was a unique challenge to immigrant parents in addition to the other two categories of challenges (meeting high parental expectations and relational challenges) they faced. Parenting among immigrant parents was complicated, which made them susceptible to being in contact with the child protection professionals. The concept of parentification described as a pathological parent-child role change was relevant in explaining challenges that immigrant parents experienced (Garber, 2011); related to this concept is also the concept of role corruption (Hooper, 2007). Hooper reported that parentification occurred among immigrant families with contexts such as broken homes, chronically ill and profoundly depressed parents, and substance-dependent parents. In this study, parentification occurred because of language-related barriers that immigrant parents experienced in Sweden. Child protection professionals recounted how language created conflicts between parents and children; children were often able to learn and speak Swedish while their parents remained illiterate in this language.

In a country such as Sweden where parental involvement in children's school, recreational, hospital and other important activities was required, language was an extremely valuable asset. Parents needed to speak Swedish in order to help children with Swedish homework and to participate in school and hospital meetings. While parents felt isolated, their children became integrated into the Swedish culture. Lewig et al. (2010) reported a similar finding on assimilation; they posited that children assimilated easily into new societies than adults who were often isolated within the host community. Immigrant children, mostly teenagers, seemed to know more about their host society than parents. Therefore, children often "interpret societal laws and content of letters to parents". Some child protection professionals claimed that this undue responsibility to children led them to usurp power from parents. This process is consistent with the concepts of parentification and role corruption reported earlier by Garber (2011) and Hooper (2007), respectively. One child protection professional reported that parents experienced a "cultural shock" on realising that the legislative and cultural differences obtaining in Sweden differed significantly from those of the countries of origin.

Garber (2011) argued that parentification could interrupt childhood development due to poor relationships and attachment issues with parents. In that case, possible "multiple vulnerability" of parenting among immigrants is likely to persist, making parenting overwhelming for immigrants. Lewig et al. (2010) reported that parents experiencing multiple vulnerability as discussed above could lead to low adaptability among parents, thus undermining responsiveness to children's needs. In such situations, stakeholders may need to influence policies and services towards improving conditions of parents with such difficulties. As suggested by Renzaho and Vignjevic (2011), interventions to promote culturally appropriate

parenting skills for immigrant parents were needed to overcome parenting difficulties experienced by parents.

Support for parents

The child protection professionals provided support to both Swedish and immigrant parents to enable them improve their parenting skills. Investigations by the child protection professionals incorporated individual children, family needs and the Barns Behov I Centrum (BBIC), a method adapted to social services regulations, which is aimed at strengthening children's perspectives and participation in care. The family therapy service was found as the most common service provided to most parents (among services such as MVP — a treatment programme for children whose ages range from less than one year to eighteen years and whose parents were abusive or suspects of abuse). The family therapy was common because the child protection professionals found it was flexible, able to capture unique needs of different parents and rewarding. Casanueva et al. (2008) reported that training in parenting was the most common service for mothers involved with child protection services in the United States of America. These authors' finding is consistent with what this study has established. However, the family therapy incorporated broader and varied services that extended beyond training parents in parenting. It was encouraging to know that professionals were "blind to differences" and saw needs although this strategy has inherent challenges. Child protection professionals at the resource centre reported having to just listen to parents talk through their challenges because that was the need. Accordingly, they enforced ethical principles for treating clients with respect, dignity and without discrimination (Slonim-Nevo, 1996). Nonetheless, professionals identified general challenges among all parents and specific challenges among immigrants. However, apart from providing immigrant parents with language and cultural interpreters, no other specific immigrant services were provided. Efforts to address individual challenges did not address structural challenges that made parenting difficult for immigrant parents. A similar observation was made by Johansson (2013), who observed that since the UNCRC encourages social workers to act in the best interest of the child, child protection professionals emphasised equal rights for all children without considering the language and economic difficulties that ethnic minority parents encountered (Johansson, 2013; Kritz and Skivenes 2010a; 2010b [in Johansson, 2013]). Considering that the challenges discussed also affect children's development, one wonders why the child protection professionals did not advocate structural changes that would consequently promote children's best interests as required by the UNCRC.

Conclusion

The child protection professionals from the social services and a resource centre played investigative and care roles to ensure that immigrant parents raised their children in a manner that satisfied standards and expectations consistent with the

new conception of childhood and application of the authoritative parenting style. Their role was specifically concerned with ensuring that immigrant parents met expectations regarding good parenting, which included showing love, handling disagreement peacefully and being committed to serving the children. However, immigrant parents frequently experienced specific challenges that undermined their capacities to meet the above desired standards and expectations regarding good parenting. Unfortunately, the services which the child protection professionals provided to the immigrant parents were limited to language and cultural interpretation. Therefore, they did not address the unique structural challenges that undermined their abilities to be good parents. Further research and policy actions are required to understand fully how the child protection professionals can be effectively prepared to provide culturally competent services to address the general and specific challenges that immigrant parents experience in Sweden.

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Chapter 5

Changing gender relations among Nepalese immigrant women in Lisbon

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Abstract Gender inequality associated with men's domination of women occurs worldwide, especially in collective cultures. The control of Nepalese women by men in Nepal is an example of gender inequality. However, migration seems to affect the nature of gender relations between Nepalese women and men, particularly in a women-centric country such as Portugal. The aim of this study was to examine the changing gender relations between Nepalese immigrant women and men in Lisbon, Portugal. A qualitative study was conducted involving ten Nepalese immigrant women residing in Lisbon, Portugal who were selected by means of snowball sampling techniques. Data were collected using individual interviews that were later transcribed verbatim and analysed using content analysis. The findings show that Nepalese immigrant women flexibly adopted new values and practices in Portugal and abandoning values and practices associated with the Nepali culture. In particular, these women experienced more freedom and respect than they had experienced in Nepal. Furthermore, gender roles were becoming blurred as their husbands were taking on roles such as cooking that were previously exclusively done by women in Nepal. Nepalese immigrant women who were single and working reported being more independent than those who were married. Participants also reported that many Nepalese immigrant men in Portugal exhibited conduct including teasing Nepalese women publicly, a practice that was common in Nepal. In general, relationships between Nepalese immigrant women and men in Lisbon were gradually equalising in view of the women's increased economic capacity and adoption of democratic cultural values. These findings have important implications for social work practice with immigrant populations.

Introduction

Migration is an important part of human history because people have moved from one place to another over centuries. The International Organisation for Migration (IOM, 2004), describes migration as a process of movement either across international borders or within a state for whatever length of time, composition and cause. However, for the Nepalese, migration involving crossing borders has mostly

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involved men. Moreover, only approximately 12% of the total Nepalese immigrant population is female, partly because Nepal is largely a patriarchal society in which men are generally the breadwinners (CBS, 2014). Consequently, many men migrate in search of improved income to support their families. Concerning the issue of patriarchy, Luitel (2008) has stated, "women in majority are the owners of households without power and prestige and men hold the power to control the woman. Whether educated or illiterate, women must be within the control of men. Just to be a man is important whether illiterate, disabled or moron". Furthermore, Manusmriti, which is known as the divine code of conduct in Hinduism, states that girls must be in the custody of their fathers when they are children, women must be under the custody of their husbands when married and under the custody of their sons as widows. Women are not allowed to be independent in any circumstances (Patwari, 2011). In keeping with the above patriarchal social arrangement, Hume (1987) stated, "nature has given man the superiority over women, by endowing him with greater strengths both of mind and body". Such a perception among men has perpetuated men's domination over women in many countries and cultures. Patriarchy is an embedded system in Nepalese society as depicted in the above historical texts and results in undue suffering of women inflected on them by men. Pradhananga and Shrestha (n.a.) reported that domestic violence in Nepal even when it occurred publicly was regarded as a family matter and any state interference was considered a violation of the family's right to privacy.

Migration of Nepalese couples alters relationships in the family significantly. Nepalese immigrants often realise that men cannot be the sole breadwinners for their families because of the low wages they receive and the increased costs of living in host countries. Many Nepalese women have consequently entered the labour market to complement their husbands' incomes to improve the well-being of their families. The changing economic situations of women have been associated with increased freedom for women and equality for couples (Walby, 1996). Walby (1996: 5) particularly stated that by entering the job market, women have achieved "a degree of autonomy and independence from men with whom they might live; … this development has positive implications for women's participation in the wider forms of decision making." What is not clear is whether these changes in the labour market have also altered the gender relations between Nepalese immigrant women and men in Portugal. The aim of this study was to examine possible changes in the gender relations between Nepalese immigrant women and men.

Main authors and theoretical contributions

Culture is a system of shared values, beliefs, attitudes, norms, customs and behaviours that are exhibited by a particular group of people (Qingxue, 2003). There are many cultures and subcultures in the world, but when culture is taken as a whole in the context of this study, Eastern culture vs. Western culture is considered. While the eastern and western cultures are distinguished in the context of this study, it is also important to note that each of the two cultures is complex

and heterogeneous.

One of the major differences between Eastern and Western cultures is depicted by the dichotomy of individualism vs. collectivism. Western culture places utmost importance on individualism, by which every individual is held responsible for his or her behaviour. Eastern culture in contrast is associated with a collective response to the problems, needs and goals of the group. People exhibiting collectivism are highly interdependent and important decisions are either taken by consensus or by the authorities (Triandis, 1993). The other difference between Eastern and Western cultures lies in their focus on either equality or hierarchy. Quingxue (2003) reported that individuality and equality were deeply connected in Western culture, where every person was seen as being equal, with the same rights and responsibilities and distinctions were not made according to diversity factors such as age and gender. In Eastern culture in contrast with Western culture, distribution of power was according to a hierarchical system with gender and age playing a prominent role in determining how high one was on the ladder. The ones at the top, mostly men, also commanded respect from those at the lower levels, mostly women and children. The opinions of children had very little importance because it was the elders who decided for the younger people, including women (Shariff, 2009). In light of these differences, it can be understood that living in a different cultural context requires Asian immigrants to make a substantial effort because their effective integration depends on how well they balance or negotiate between Eastern and Western cultures.

Rolls and Chamberlain (2004) reported that Nepalese women living in Australia were well integrated because they changed from living in a traditional extended family to a nuclear family arrangement. For some Nepalese women, migration was a timely way to escape from gendered hierarchies in Nepal. Nepalese immigrant women enjoyed the liberating experiences regarding being released from the pressure of serving as daughters-in-law in extended families. The development of an independent egalitarian nuclear family seemed to be a key factor that was most appreciated because men were increasingly assuming non-traditional care-giving roles that they could not perform in Nepal. Choudhry (1997) reported that Hindu traditions require women to be self-sacrificing and modest. Yet women from developed societies enjoy individualism and equality of gender that Nepalese immigrant women in Australia have also discovered.

Pires (2002) reported that it was important to understand paradigms of social integration to better articulate the position of immigrants in relation to the host society. These paradigms include assimilation, which refers to the process of inclusion of immigrants in the host society, with a possibility of participation in the framework of interaction. The other paradigm is ethnicisation, which refers to the process of construction of collective sense of identity and solidarity which overcomes other social divisions. In the context of ethnicisation, an individual's position in these parameters determines the level of social integration. Heckmann (2006) suggests that integration involves four different dimensions which are structural integration, cultural integration, interactive integration and identificational integration. The level of social integration of women immigrants in these dimensions facilitates a better understanding

of how connected to the host society they are.

Change in gender roles is another facet of women's immigration that has been reported in previous research. For example, Lourenco (2011) reported that a growing number of Hindu women in the labour market showed that they were negotiating their gender roles and playing both the role of care giver and breadwinner for their families. Adhikari (2013) similarly reported that educated and professional women working abroad had substantial bargaining power in marriage. The author also stated that Nepalese men who were already in the UK as dependent husbands had been frustrated and demoralised because they were no longer heads of their families or bread winners. Therefore, such men no longer held the same status as they did when they lived in Nepal. For example, these men shared the responsibility for childcare, which was essentially done by women in Nepal. The above literature has shown that migration significantly influences gender roles and relations among immigrants.

Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative approach to data collection, analysis and reporting. Accordingly, snowball sampling was used in selecting participants. The leading selection criteria were:

—   Nepalese women who had been living in Portugal for at least a year; and
—   Nepalese women who were at least 18 years old and above.

Participants were accessed with the assistance of known Nepalese families in Lisbon. Members of these families were informed about the research and the characteristics of individuals who could participate. Subsequently, one of the eligible individuals provided contact numbers of other probable participants. Only 10 individuals were sampled for this study.

This study was conducted in the Lisbon metropolitan area because the majority of Nepalese women resided in this area; 83% of the total Nepalese women in Portugal lived in Lisbon in 2013 (SEF, 2014). Nepalese women with differing marital statuses, that is, single, married and divorced were included in this study. Primary data were collected by the means of individual in-depth interviews. The researcher used content analysis to identify the many hidden aspects of what the interviewees communicated in their interviews (Denscombe, 2010). Content analysis was carried out with the help of the analytical framework suggested by Heckmann (2006) regarding social integration. Heckmann categorises social integration as structural, cultural, interactive and identificational. Berry's (1997) acculturation strategies based on assimilation, integration, separation and marginalisation were also used as analytical frames.

Verbal consent was obtained from participants before the interviews were conducted. To ensure voluntary participation, probable participants were provided with relevant information and asked to consider participating in this study.

Participants were informed that their names would not be used in this study; their identities will remain anonymous and only pseudonyms would be used in the findings section. Additionally, they were informed that all the collected data would be kept with strict confidentiality.

Findings and discussion

Findings are presented and discussed according to three themes that emerged from the data. These themes are (i) change in cultural values among Nepalese women in Portugal, (ii) Nepalese immigrant women and transformation of gender roles according to economic and marital status, and (iii) dress code and religion after integration: balancing tradition and modernity.

Socio-demographic characteristics of participants

Participants in this study were aged between 30 and 42. Four of the participants were aged 32 years; participants had also lived in Portugal for a minimum of 2 years and a maximum of 5 years. With regard to their marital status, seven were married, two were divorced and one was single. Reasons for immigration to Portugal included family reunification and search for employment. A key finding in this study was that some women participants had migrated to Portugal when they were married but left their husbands and children in Nepal. The phenomenon of married Nepalese women migrating and leaving their families in Nepal is not common (Lourenco, 2013). In addition, most of the participants were formally educated: five had a bachelor's degree; four had secondary school level education and one had primary school level education. Most of the participants had established personal businesses in Portugal. Moreover, nine of the participants had also been employed in highly respected jobs, including law and teaching before they migrated to Portugal. In terms of religious affiliation, eight of the participants were from Hinduism, one believed in both Hinduism and Buddhism and one was a Christian, while another interviewee did not follow any specific religion. Finally, every participant except one had successfully undertaken a basic Portuguese language course.

Change in cultural values among Nepalese women in Lisbon, Portugal

Culture is a patterned way of life shared by a group of people that encompasses all that human beings have and do to produce, relate to each other and adapt to their physical environments (Kipuri, 2009). This definition of culture applies to the Nepalese immigrant women in Portugal because they attempted to make a better understanding of themselves and to adapt to their new surroundings in accordance with what they perceived to be the best for them and their families. It was found that

Nepalese women demonstrated flexibility by adapting to certain aspects of culture in Portugal. This flexibility among immigrants and adaptation to culture has been reported elsewhere (Kwak and Berry, 2001; Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco, 2001). Almost all the participants reported that they cherished some cultural values that were predominant in Portugal. Such values include freedom and independence, more gender equality and respect for women; these values are commonly associated with an individualistic culture (Triandis, 1988).

Nepalese immigrant women and transformation of gender roles according to their economic and marital status

To understand the status of Nepalese immigrant women in Portugal, it is important to analyse it in the context of their families, Nepalese society in Portugal and their workplaces as well as their culturally determined gender roles.

Nepalese immigrant women and family

Participants reported that there was a change in gender roles among Nepalese immigrant families in Portugal. One of the interviewees illustrates:

> My small son (2 months old) cries at night, so I get to sleep around 2 AM and wake up late in the morning. So, my husband prepares lunch for my elder son and gets him ready for school. I used to prepare lunch for my elder son before my younger son was born. [Puja, a 32-year-old and married woman]

As stated above, gender roles changed in the family after a new child was born.

In some Nepalese immigrant families, there was still an imbalance in gender roles because women were still unappreciated for household work done. One participant stated:

> Women are busy most of the time. When someone asks, "what work have you done"? The housework is not seen. Is it not also work? … My husband comes home and asks me, "what have you done until now?" He asks, "You just cooked rice!" In order to cook rice we have to prepare so many things. It takes around two hours to prepare food and the house gets dirty, which also takes time to clean it. When I am busy with housework my husband asks, "What have you done? You have not done anything." It is the same for every family…you cannot notice how time is spent. This work is something that is done only by women. [Sapana, a 37-year-old married woman]

Some participants reported that they were independent yet the levels of freedom depended on their marital status. Participants who came to Portugal by themselves in search of work were more independent than the ones who joined their husband by means of family reunification. The following quotation illustrates the differing levels of independence among the Nepalese immigrant women in Portugal:

> What I like about the European culture is freedom … I can do whatever I want. When we compare Nepal and Portugal, women have to keep within certain boundaries in the Nepalese culture; women have to stay below men but it is not like this in Europe. This is a women-centric country. [Anjali, a 30-year-old single woman]

The woman quoted above was the only unmarried participant. Moreover, she disliked the Nepali culture, which according to her, restricted women's boundaries regarding freedom and autonomy. When she came to Portugal, Anjali had to start all over by herself in this new environment by creating a new social network, finding a job and residence as well as overcoming language barriers. Such accomplishments must have taken much resilience and determination on her part as a single woman. In general, single and divorced women participants felt they were autonomous and often used words such as 'independent', 'self-dependent' and 'free' to describe their life situations in Portugal.

Nepalese immigrant women in the Nepalese Society in Portugal

Participants reported that Portuguese men viewed Nepalese immigrant women differently from the way Nepalese men viewed the same women. For example, Nisha, a 32-year-old married woman stated thus:

Man and woman are equal here. Women are not seen in a bad way. Women are treated very well and there is no distinction between men and women. But Nepalese men discriminate against women. Even if a woman has a good character men look at her in negative way.

Similarly, Anjali, a 30-year-old single woman stated:

> Approximately 99.9% of Nepalese men in Portugal have the same attitude towards women as that of the men in Nepal. When women walk on the street Nepalese men start teasing them. In Portugal, they tease me but I do not look back at them. I walk away from them but they keep on teasing me. That is their habit. They say, "Oh that girl, that girl is like this and that". They do not stop saying this kind of thing. Women are always perceived in a negative way. If a man for example, walks with many women then he is a good man and if a women walks with different men, she is said to be a woman without character.

The above account suggests that Nepalese women felt uncomfortable when they were teased by Nepalese men in public, a practice that Portuguese men did not do. The teasing being described by the participant relates to being shamed and accused of having no morals by Nepalese men.

Some participants reported that they were free from restrictions imposed by the Nepali culture after they settled in Portugal.

> Definitely, it is easy for a woman in this culture because in Nepal, there are many restrictions for women. Women should not do this; women should not walk like this; women should not speak in this way; women should not speak with a loud voice;

women should not fight; women should not come home late, etc. Even if a woman works at night, there must be a discussion on whether she should work or not. It would have been a problem for me but I am free because I am in Portugal. [Sujata, a 37-year-old divorced woman]

It was found that Nepalese married women who migrated to Portugal through family reunification were less free/independent than the Nepalese single working women who migrated to Portugal for other reasons. However, the latter category of women did not openly show their independence because they felt that their husbands in particular and the Nepalese community in Portugal would not be pleased with it. Such an attitude suggests that patriarchy was still influential among Nepalese immigrants.

Nepalese immigrant women in the context of work

Almost all the participants were working in the labour market in Portugal. Because they were working, they earned an income, which promoted economic independence and were also able to regularly interact with the Portuguese. A single woman who came to Portugal alone described her work situation as follows: "We came to a foreign country and now we can stand on our own feet. We struggled for ourselves" (Shanti, a 36-year-old married woman). This woman had her own business and was economically independent. Likewise, Pragati, a 42-year-old married woman who came to Portugal alone stated:

> We came to Portugal to do our own work. Everyone has equal status here. If you do not work then you cannot pay rent; you have to pay for food. You have to work and whatever I do is for myself and I am proud of myself.

The experiences of married Nepalese women who were living in Portugal with their husbands were different from those of single women regarding freedom and independence. For example, Sharmila, a 32-year-old married woman stated:

> We do not want to show that we are independent. We have our culture in Nepal where husbands (pause) whatever happens, Nepal is a patriarchal country. In Portugal and other European countries, there is no patriarchy. We are independent but we do not want to show that.

Another participant stated: "I am very delighted here. I do not need to show how much I earn, to show my accounts to anyone" (Sujata, a 37-year-old divorced woman). The reason for this proclamation might be that this participant was previously accustomed to showing and sharing her income with her husband and other family members. Since she was in charge of her own life, did not have to be accountable to anyone and because she was in control of her income she was also economically more secure than before she migrated to Portugal.

Gender equality

Participants reported that there was gender equality in Portuguese society, which did not exist in Nepalese society. Participants explained gender equality by comparing the cultures of Nepal and Portugal as shown in the following quotation:

> Man and woman are equal in Portugal. Women are not seen in a bad way. Women here are treated very well and they are treated equally as men. However, in Nepal women were discriminated against. [Nisha a 32-year-old married woman]

Similarly, Ichhya, a 34-year-old divorced woman stated: "Everything is good here. They have a positive attitude towards women. They treat women and men equally". These accounts show that participants experienced gender equality between men and women. The equal treatment of women with men in Portugal demonstrated to them the magnitude regarding gender inequality that occurred in Nepal.

Dress code and religion after integration: balancing tradition and modernity

Lourenco (2010) in her study on the Hindu diaspora in Portugal stated that it is important to study the dress code because wearing Western attire and having a similar outer appearance to that of westerners was a symbol of independence and modernity among Hindu women. Most Nepalese women participants who belonged to the Hindu religion stated that they did not adhere to a particular dress code associated with Hinduism. In fact, they wore clothes which they considered Western, including trousers and shirts. Most of the participants stated that they wore traditional dress such as *kurtha* or *sari* only at special events, for example when cerebrating Hindu festivals. Such a change in their dominant dress code suggests that Nepalese immigrant women had been significantly influenced by the independence and modernity experienced in Portugal.

Conclusion

The position of Nepalese immigrant women and men in the context of their families and other spaces in Lisbon, Portugal, was unequal due to the enduring patriarchy that is a core aspect of the Nepali culture. However, the gender relations between Nepalese immigrant women and men in Portugal were steadily equalising as the women became increasingly integrated into the Portuguese culture. In particular, being gainfully employed promoted a sense of independence and respect for the Nepalese immigrant women. Nepalese immigrant women who were single or divorced were also generally more independent and integrated into the Portuguese culture than Nepalese immigrant women who were married and highly dependent on their husbands for their livelihood. While some Nepalese immigrant women who were married and gainfully employed felt they were independent, they did not want to publicly show their freedoms because they would be considered inappropriate in

the Nepali culture. Moreover, Nepalese immigrant women thought that Nepalese immigrant men in Portugal still endorsed Nepali cultural beliefs, values and practices that manifested in men's domination of women. Future studies should include Nepalese immigrant men to assess their perceptions of the developing gender relations in the context of their immigration to Portugal.

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Chapter 6
The way out of gendered poverty?
Economic empowerment of young mothers through ngo support in Uganda

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Abstract Gender disparity affects women worldwide because their needs for economic rights and empowerment remain unmet. However, the role of women in development is being increasingly acknowledged in many countries. In Uganda, many women are marginalised due to various factors, including discrimination in the workplace, unfavourable expectations that women must encounter, less valued housework and early onset of motherhood, especially due inadequate sexual and reproductive health services. The aim of this study was to assess how an NGO know as Health Child contributed to the economic empowerment of its young women beneficiaries. Fifteen mothers aged 18 to 24 years and living in Jinja, eastern Uganda were enrolled in this study using purposive and snowball techniques. In-depth interviews with the young women and key informants were conducted. Additionally, a review of secondary documents was done to complement the empirical data. Qualitative data were analysed using narrative and thematic analysis methods. Findings show that young mothers associated many benefits with their participation in the livelihood strengthening programme of Health Child. Young women who had participated longer in the programme felt more economically and socially empowered than young women who had participated in the same programme for relatively shorter time. Women reported increased capacity to meet costs of basic needs such as food, medical care and scholastic materials for their children. They also reported being respected by their husbands and fellow community members because of improved incomes. While Health Child provided the young women with skills and knowledge to run their village and loans associations (VSLAs) and expected them to gradually become independent, they continued to depend on the NGO support. Furthermore, while many men eventually accepted their wives' participation in VSLAs, many others did not support or allow their wives to become active members of VSLAs because of the existing patriarchy. Despite these challenges, there were considerable reported positive changes in the lives of women with regard to their social and economic empowerment. These findings suggest important implications for social work practice in the context of continued gender inequality, poverty and diminished government provision of welfare services to marginalised groups such as women.

Keywords: young mothers, Uganda, poverty, economic empowerment, gender

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Introduction

Gender disparity affects women worldwide as their needs for economic rights and generally empowerment remain unmet (United Nations Development Programme, 2015). However, the role of women in development is being increasingly acknowledged in many countries. CARE International has emphatically stated that girls and women are not just the faces of poverty; they are also centrally positioned to contribute towards poverty alleviation (CARE, 2016). Empowerment of women and girls was identified in the United Nation's Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as vital to ensuring shared prosperity, as there is a relationship between gender equality at the household level and societal development (World Bank, 2016). Dibie and Dibie (2012: 95) similarly stated, "offering women the opportunity to access economic resources as well as to disentangle their identities from those of their families will contribute immensely to sustainable development". Therefore, women need access to constituents of development such as health, education, earning opportunities, rights and political participation (Duflo, 2012: 1053). Concerted efforts from the private sector, national governments and NGOs are required to ensure increased realisation of rights by women in Africa (Dibie & Dibie, 2012).

In Uganda, economic empowerment of women is far from being realised. A number of factors account for this reality, including civil conflicts and the HIV/AIDS epidemic (Wakoko, 2003). As opposed to the ageing population of the global north, the Ugandan population is relatively very young. In fact, Uganda has the second lowest median age in the world at 15.6 years. Uganda's fertility rate of 5.8 children per woman is one of the highest in the world (Central Intelligence Agency ([CIA], 2015; Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS), 2014). Many women in Uganda become mothers in adolescence partly because they do not access to contraceptives and are illiterate regarding sexual and reproductive health (UNICEF, 2015; UBOS, 2011).

Because women have limited access to resources and opportunities compared with men, being a young mother in Uganda is a complicated experience. Many young women's dreams for dependable livelihoods for themselves and their children often do not materialise. Despite being economically active, young mothers usually lack formal education, financial support and are sometimes stigmatised and rejected by their families and community (Leerlooijer et al., 2014). Although structural adjustment and economic liberalisation programmes aimed at improving the Ugandan economy have been implemented over the years, they have not benefited many Ugandans, including women.

This study focused on how social work practice targeting economic empowerment was beneficial to young mothers, who are a demographic group that is critical to the development of their families and the country. Many NGOs have implemented various interventions in Uganda to empower women in areas such as skills training, mentorship and microfinance. However, there is limited understanding of whether these interventions are in fact helping and are appropriate to the unique needs and challenges of young mothers. The perspectives and expertise of young mothers on how a local NGO known as Health Child was empowering them economically were assessed in this study.

Research question[A1]

This study aimed to answer the following question:

—   How do young Ugandan mothers benfit from Health Child's programmes
     designed to empower them socio-economically?

Main authors and theoretical framework

Empowerment, feminist and gender theories formed the theoretical basis of this
study. Feminist and empowerment theories are especially important to the under-
standing of individual and sociopolitical levels of social work assessment and in-
tervention. Incorporating feminist and empowerment approaches into practice
provides social workers with the knowledge, values and skills required to promote
human rights and social justice (Turner & Maschi, 2015: 151). These theories focus
on marginalisation, domination, subordination, power and resistance. While femi-
nist theory emphasises gender and empowerment theory emphasises social class,
ethnicity and culture, they both look at collective and individual identity. Both the-
ories can contribute to the understanding of oppression and domination.

Defining empowerment

The concept of empowerment was introduced into social work by the psycholo-
gist Julian Rappaport, who described it as "the mechanism by which people, or-
ganisations, and communities gain mastery over their lives" (Rappaport, 1984: 3).
Empowerment occurs through "increasing one's authority and control over the
resources and decisions that affect his or her life" (Nayaran-Parker, 2002: 14).
There are three dimensions of empowerment, namely personal, relational and
collective. Personal empowerment entails the ability of an individual to confront
internalised oppressions; relational empowerment entails the ability of an indi-
vidual to negotiate and influence decisions in a relationship; while collective
empowerment entails combined power and dedication of individuals. Other im-
portant dimensions of empowerment are social, educational, economic and polit-
ical empowerment. Social empowerment has to do with strengthening one's
access to community resources and decision-making processes, while educa-
tional empowerment occurs through access to adequate education that prepares
one for work and social life. Economic empowerment is achieved when one can
afford adequate food, shelter and clothes; political empowerment relates to par-
ticipation in democratic decision-making at community and national levels (An-
derson et al., 1994).

Social work approach to empowerment

The term empowerment in social work practice presupposes the existence of power imbalance and the relationship between the powerful and the powerless. The social work approach to empowerment does not merely entail empowering or emancipating others by suggesting what their needs or aims are and it should not set people's agenda (Tew, 2006). Rather, the social worker has invaluable roles to play, which include facilitator, mediator, advocate and political ally in assisting people in liberating themselves (Anderson et al., 1994). Crucial to this is to enable the oppressed to help themselves and for the social worker to work with indigenous leadership and have awareness of the available resources (Lee & Hudson, 2011). The social worker should promote "distributive justice in the form of health care, income, services and a range of resources for those who have been left out of the mainstream society" (Lee & Hudson, 2011: 159). In order to do so, the social worker must treat people as experts in their own lives and understand perceptions of their own situations in order to truly know how to increase their sense of agency (Ibrahim & Alkire, 2007). Only this will enable people to make real choices about the services they receive.

Important directions within empowerment theory

Power has both positive and negative implications, and several types of power may be possessed simultaneously. Power can be exercised in the following four ways: *Power over* is when someone controls a person's decisions or when there is manipulation or structural oppression; while *power to* is more productive because the domination has decreased but the privileged still benefit the most. *Power with* happens when a group or a community gain co-operative power to fight the oppressive power with or for others; and *power from within* is when self-respect and acceptance of self is at the core and wherein individuals look to make changes in their communal lives (Ibrahim & Alkire, 2007; Tew, 2006). The critical pedagogue, Paulo Freire, coined the term *conscientisation* which was illustrated with the analogy of the student-teacher relationship in which the latter treats the former as a co-creator of knowledge, hence raising the student's critical consciousness and enabling the student to be active and critical instead of passive (Freire, 2006). This analogy of teacher-student relationship is relevant to any social worker-service user relationship because it is crucial for "action and reflection of men and women upon their world in order to transform it" (2006: 72). While it is important to identify oppressive societal structures, the empowerment approach in social work practice focuses on addressing strengths of service users. Because some people have muted, unrealised or intrinsic potentials and powers, finding these may transform people from helpless victims into assertive and efficacious persons (Anderson et al., 1994: 79; Saleebey, 2006). It is after all the "client [who] knows best what the problem or issue is and has strengths which can be built on" (Turner & Maschi, 2015: 159).

Feminist and gender theory

Feminist theory focuses on gender inequality, particularly on oppression and patriarchy; it also focuses on femininity, sexuality and sexual identity. Gender theory in contrast with feminist theory is closely related to its interdisciplinary analyses of gender roles, identity, interests, experience and representation. The early rise of gender theorisation came with French feminist Simone de Beauvoir and her revolutionary quote "one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" (Beauvoir, 1949: 267). From then onwards, sex was largely perceived in biological terms whereas gender reflected a social identity. The binary dichotomy of man-woman was problematised and challenged due to its devaluing positioning of women. It is still "on the basis of gender, and not sex, that women's subordination and ultimate disadvantage in society is interpreted" (Twikirize, 2014b: 57). As Western scholarship has dominated much of science, many African theorists understand the concept of gender as a colonial imposition. Some theorists argue that gender in Africa is completely "divorced from feminism" because it has become, unlike feminism, "emptied of its political impetus" (Ahikire, 2008: 4). African gender theory is concerned with the fact that the existing culture and customs are the legacy of African customs rooted in Islam, Christianity and traditional religions as well as strongly influenced by colonial law notions and legal systems, the combined effect of which has led to the subordination of women (Adjetey, 1995). Therefore, women's emancipation lies in the hands of both men and women's subjectivity. This is because many women are guilty in maintaining the status quo; many women also oppress other women by "advocating cultural practices that subjugate them" (Rotimi, 2007: 248). Furthermore, many men are victims of patriarchy as they are trapped in the privilege system and must be educated in women's rights (Gatwiri & McLaren, 2016).

Post-colonial and African feminist discourse

Many African women were active in agitating for independence of their countries, which also gave rise to a demand for democratisation of equal rights (Mikell, 1995). However, the reputation of the dominant western feminist discourse as an ideology of lesbian love, man-hatred and rejection of motherhood has caused resentment in African women towards the word feminism (Arndt, 2002). It has also gained a reputation for rejecting the plurality of feminism, resulting in the introduction of more indigenous concepts such as stiwanism (social transformations including women in Africa) and negofeminism (feminism of negotiation). The post-colonial feminist, Chandra Mohanty argues that "Third World feminism" must make the foundation for "autonomous feminist concerns and strategies that are geographically, historically, and culturally grounded" (Mohanty, 2003: 17). African feminists refer to women as having been twice alienated through colonisation from both their native culture and the colonisers' culture, and consequently from the feminist discourse (Elia, 2001). Africa is known as having the oldest "human

struggle against patriarchy" and abundant evidence of women's resistance that "contradicts any stereotypes of passivity" (Norwood, 2013: 226).

Western feminism is heavily criticised for its secular and capitalist bias and preoccupation with economic activities that find a place within the networks of exchange of the capitalist, global economy (Ahmed, 2000; Syed, 2010). This bias rejects the recognition of all unpaid work carried out by women, such as in the informal sector, domestic or reproductive work, a sector that in Africa is dominated by women (Gatwiri & McLaren, 2016). What binds African feminist theory is affirmation of motherhood and cooperation with men but at the same time a preoccupation with a differentiated critique of patriarchal structures (Arndt, 2002). Gender roles are discussed in the context of multiple and interlocking oppressive systems of patriarchy, slavery, neo-colonialism, gerontocracy, imperialism, religious fundamentalism and socio-economic exclusion (Arndt, 2002; Norwood, 2013). The community is a place of relational gendered roles such as sisterhood, motherhood and friendship, and thus the main site for solidarity, resistance and empowerment (Chilisa and Ntseane, 2010). For this reason, one can see "female organisations and collective actions by women in the interest of women, an awareness shared by women at all points along the continuum" (Mikell, 1995: 407).

Methodology

The research participants were selected from a Ugandan NGO known as Health Child, which focuses on empowering local communities for healthy children (Health Child, 2016). The primary beneficiaries of this NGO were children below the age of eight. The main areas of the programme concerned health, education, child protection and livelihood strengthening. The last component mainly targeted mothers of children enrolled in this NGO's early learning centres. The livelihood strengthening programme was implemented in 2014, adopting the village savings and loan association (VSLA) methodology. In a VSLA, 15-20 women and men received skills trainings. The group met weekly for 8-12 months to deposit money into three different funds; a health fund, a social fund and a loans fund. One of the rules that governed operation of the VSLAs was that 70 per cent of the group had to be women. The VSLAs had a chairperson, treasurer, key holders and counters as well as focal persons for early childhood development, and sanitation and health.

The study was conducted in Jinja district, which lies on the shore of lake Victoria in Busoga, Eastern Uganda. In the aftermath of deindustrialisation in the 1970s, the town experienced a rise in unemployment (Bakamanume, 2010), which led to intensification of subsistence farming, cash cropping, fishing and trading in rural and urban areas (Otiso, 2006). In search of alternative sources of livelihood, many people migrated to Jinja, which posed major housing-related challenges resulting in the growth of slum settlements (Bakamanume, 2010).

I adopted a case study design that assessed intervention of the NGO with the purpose of ascertaining whether it had achieved its anticipated objectives from the

point of view of the beneficiaries (Bryman, 2012: 70). I aimed at looking at 'info that is helpful in planning the programme and in improving its implementation and performance' (Babbie and Rubin, 2014: 349). Aiming for a gender sensitive study, a feminist methodology was incorporated, recognising biases throughout the research from the choice of the study area to data collection methods and analysis. This study emphasised women's experience; the qualitative interviews enabled the 'women's voices to be heard and in their own words' (Bryman, 2012: 411).

Fifteen mothers aged 18 to 24, who were enrolled in the livelihood strengthening programme, were interviewed. To obtain further insight into the NGO's operations, interviews were conducted with a social worker, the project nurse and the early learning assistant. Participants were sampled by the use of purposive and snowball-sampling techniques in the following areas: (i) Kibuga-Mbatta slum, (ii) Masese 1 and (iii) Kabembe A and B villages in Kakira. The mean age of the young mothers was 21.46 years. Twelve of the women were married, two were divorced and one was single. Two participants had no children, but one was pregnant and the other the main caretaker of her stepchild; the average number of children per mother was 1.6. The mean age at first birth was 16.9 years. The majority of the young mothers were engaged in small-scale food vending and farming, the rest in laundry service, tailoring and telecommunications, while five were homemakers. Five mothers had been involved in VSLAs from the start, four had been involved for more than one year and six had recently become members.

Because the young mothers' English skills were limited, a female research assistant who was fluent in English, Lusoga and Luganda was used. The first section of the interview asked for details about the interviewees before discussing topics related to economic empowerment. I reviewed secondary documents such as annual reports from the NGO, national surveys and censuses and a slum settlement profile to supplement the primary data. To analyse the findings, narrative and thematic analysis were employed as approaches that 'both take as their analytic object language and meaning' (Shukla et al., 2014: 3).

Findings and discussion

The findings are presented and discussed under the following themes: (i) strengths and limitations of Health Child's livelihood strengthening programme, (ii) immediate benefits of participating in the programme, and (iii) long-term gender-related impacts.

Strengths and limitations of Health Child's livelihood strengthening programme

Findings show that positive effects of Health Child's economic intervention were apparent and increased with time of the beneficiary's involvement in the programme. The NGO mobilised a large number of economically deprived young mothers who

were equipped with the tools needed to liberate and empower them (Tew, 2006). Accordingly, the young mothers received skills training as a means of empowering them (Anderson et al., 1994). The NGO used the VSLA methodology to enhance financial literacy and provided an important forum for knowledge exchange on various child- and family-related matters. The VSLAs were presented with strategies facilitating the gradual withdrawal of monitoring by the NGO. One important aspect of empowerment is to let group members do things themselves and to treat them as experts (Lee & Hudson, 2011). The NGO adopted strategies such as helping VSLAs to draft their constitutions, determine the amount to be saved weekly and elect group leaders.

> We train them on how to develop a constitution. For example, if they save and make a group, they have to make those guidelines that will help their group run effectively even without us (Social worker).

The VSLA methodology can be understood in light of Paulo Freire's (2006) theory of conscientisation in which the teacher and the student work together towards self-liberation of the oppressed. Freire (2006) calls this the pedagogy of the oppressed. While Health Child's strategies seemed to have a similar theoretical foundation, the findings show that this was not straightforward, trouble-free or at times even feasible. The VSLAs gave the young mothers of different ages and other attributes a sense of community.

> I like being in the group; it has helped me to save my money and improved my saving skills (Cathy, NGO beneficiary and young mother).

> Women in the group tell you the situation as it is. They encourage you to save and give you time to pay back without putting pressure on someone (Betty, NGO beneficiary and young mother).

Powerful testimonies were shared about learning sustainable saving methods, which made the young mothers hopeful about their future. However, limitations of the livelihood strengthening programme were also evident. Due to their adult ages and low educational backgrounds, some young mothers were unable to acquire the skills which were being taught to them. Another challenge was that VSLAs had grown dependent on monitoring by the NGO. Yet, according to this methodology, the NGO staff were supposed to withdraw gradually from monitoring the VSLAs. In some VSLAs, leaders had unilaterally introduced schemes that were not agreed upon by all members or they had caused disagreements. Power imbalance between leaders and regular members and between older and younger members was an obstacle to their full participation in the groups. This applied to somebody being in a position of having controlling and manipulating *power over* the others (Tew, 2006). Perhaps it is possible to say that the culture did not oppress the young mothers but the power embedded in their friendships, relational worlds and forms of knowledge construction and negotiation, as suggested by Fennell and Arnot (2008). Moreover,

the leaders, key stakeholders and counters needed more NGO support because they reported that they often felt their responsibilities were a burden.

> One of my fellow counters was a thief who stole USh650.000[2] and all of us were taken to police [---] I was demotivated but again was actually forced to keep the key (Carolyn, NGO beneficiary and young mother).

Additionally, many of the young mothers desired more skills training, and only a few were offered this.

Immediate benefits of participating

Most of the young mothers experienced moderate or more substantial benefits in their lives after joining the livelihoods' strengthening programme. According to the participants, much less unpredictability generally marked everyday life than before the young mothers joined the VSLAs. Most of the young mothers reported how they could afford sufficient and nutritious foods for their families. Previously, many of these young mothers could afford only one meal a day, or in some cases, sacrificed eating altogether in order to feed their children.

> Last year we were able to enjoy Christmas; we ate good food, bought new clothes and I was happy because my family was happy. December is usually a month for pressure but last year, I was peaceful (Stella, NGO beneficiary and young mother).

Some young mothers could not afford treatment for their children's and own illnesses before they joined VSLAs. After joining the VSLAs, access to medical treatment immediately improved because the young mothers could borrow money for medical care from the health fund. Many of the young mothers had not been able to complete their education due to lack of school fees and materials. With support from the VSLAs, the young mothers had increased financial capacity to meet the costs of school materials for their children, and provided their children with formal education that they themselves had not acquired.

> My life was hard. It was difficult because I had no money to go to school. No fees. No transport (Brenda, NGO beneficiary and young mother).

Improving on their houses because of increased earning not only enabled the young mothers to have improved overall living standards, but it was also a source of pride and recognition in the community. Several of the young mothers also reported that they could afford to purchase clothes and skin lotions, as well as treating their hair, something that was impossible previously. Another benefit that the

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2   Approximately USD 178.

young mothers experienced was learning how to save money. Having acquired money management skills, they were able to plan their projects, expand the already existing businesses and construct semi-permanent houses and buy plots of land. Non-economic benefits such as acquiring knowledge on a range of topics such as early childhood learning, antenatal and postnatal care and basic skills such as time management were reported. The VSLAs enabled relationships to form among the young mothers, which were both empowering and disempowering; sometimes collective empowerment may actually hinder personal empowerment (Ibrahim & Alkire, 2007; Tew, 2006). The VSLAs nevertheless became a place for forming friendship and sisterhood among the young mothers.

> Women in the group tell you the reality of situation. They encourage you to save and give you time to pay back a debt without putting pressure on you (Betty, NGO beneficiary and young mother).

Getting involved with the livelihoods' strengthening programme was undoubtedly the first modest step in ending the cycle of extreme economic deprivation and poverty among the young mothers.

Long-term gender-related impacts

Before joining the livelihood strengthening programme the young mothers strived to access vital resources and the majority experienced negative attitudes from their partners whenever they expressed their wish to start saving money.

> He does not know yet. That is my money! What if he brings his ideas on my money? He can support me, but we might disagree on what to use the money for. I just have to keep quiet [---] my husband is violent, my dear (Maria, NGO beneficiary and young mother).

Men often have the conception that interventions to increase women's financial autonomy will shift gender norms in their disfavour. This notion was confirmed by one husband who tried to prevent his wife from going to a VSLA due to the belief that making savings would lead to disobedience. From the beginning, whereas only two of the mothers had received their spouses' support, several of the mothers had been prevented by their husbands from joining the VSLAs. Husbands had also threatened some of the mothers with violence. The fact that they chose to start saving by risking their safety was a demonstration of these women's determination to become emancipated. While some of the young mothers' participation remained secret due to their fear of reprisals from husbands or other family members, others experienced positive changes in the relationship with their husbands. Many husbands started helping in raising the amounts saved, while a few husbands even attended the VSLAs' meetings if their wives were not able to attend in person. African feminism suggests that men are trapped victims in the privilege system of

patriarchy and through education will realise how to treat women well (Gatwiri & McLaren, 2016). The study shows that there was a growing understanding by men of the importance of supporting their wives financially.

> Initially, I had to beg my husband for everything and this would put him under pressure but he is OK now and accepts me going to the group (Sarah, NGO beneficiary and young mother)

The findings also showed that several of the young mothers became autonomous and, to a lesser extent, had to consult their husbands before spending their earned money. Gaining respect from their partners was an important change because it led to increased decision-making power. Several of the young mothers dared to challenge their husbands and some experienced having their opinions taken into account by their husbands. A sense of improved agency was evident among the young mothers.

> My life has changed. I no longer have pressures even when the child is sent away because of school fees, I no longer have to wait for their father to come back and help. I simply go, pick up money and pay fees (Brenda, NGO beneficiary and young mother).

Alongside operating microenterprises, most young mothers who participated in this study were planning to set up rentals and invest in buying and selling land, an activity that was dominated by men. Those that had been members of VSLAs for a long period had concrete investment plans. In terms of relationships with other women in the community, there was an increasing feeling of sisterhood and respect.

Additional findings

Finally, some other findings and recommendations are reported below. It was appalling to discover that many men had posed powerful obstacles to women's empowerment; indeed, they had a high degree of control over their partners and posed a serious threat to their economic empowerment. Gender-based violence, perpetuated by husbands, occurred and involved physical, sexual and psychological violence to the young mothers. Exploring the public debate on gender expectations in this context, the strong affirmation of motherhood, early marriage and the wide presence of patriarchal decision-making models were interesting findings. Amidst the strongly gendered realities of the young mothers, several testimonies of social empowerment, children's educational empowerment, increased recognition of women's rights and community participation were also reported.

Miriam (24) got married at the age of 20 and has a 4-year-old child... She dropped out of school because of the lack of school fees. Her husband had little money... Miriam was a beneficiary of Health Child through their ECD centre... Her husband supported her joining the VSLA and saving... She took a loan and started a small restaurant with her husband... She is hopeful and feels she is recovering from poverty... The relationship with her husband was better than before she joined a VSLA. Miriam plans to buy land and build a house... She now feels she has power and likes to advise other women to join VSLAs.

Stella (23) is a single mother with two children... She used to struggle to pay rent, school fees and buy food...Her former husband does not provide support for their children. Stella joined the VSLA after the chairperson of her group advised her to join. She currently sells tomatoes... Her VSLA group has had some problems but these are now sorted... Stella is worrying less and can afford school fees for her children. She can also make important decisions herself and is admired in the community as a successful single mother. Stella plans to buy a cow and start a retail shop.

Joy (23) got married five years ago and has two children. She used to work as a tailor, but struggled to pay rent or medical bills and generally to support her family... Joy was invited to join the VSLA through her child's primary school. Her husband initially stopped her from saving but she resisted his efforts and continued to save in the VISLA. She is now the secretary of her VSLA, which can sometimes be challenging... Her husband appreciates her saving and now supports her in doing so. Joy still does tailoring and sells second-hand clothes. She says Health Child has taught her to save and make friends. Many young women consult her. She is able to send her child to school and she no longer fears debts; she plans to start a second business and build a family house.

Note: all the names used in this chapter to describe participants are pseudonyms to ensure anonymity

Conclusion

Health Child's livelihood strengthening programme designed to empower young mothers economically may not be a steady way out of gendered poverty in Uganda. However, its contribution was very impactful both in the short and long term with regard to the young mothers' economic empowerment in particular and social development in general. There were many positive effects from the programme, which increased with the beneficiaries' time of involvement. In particular, the young mothers and their families benefited from increased capacity to meet basic needs such as food, medical care and paying school fees. The young mothers also attained essential knowledge and skills as well as enhancing earning opportunities through the creation or expansion of their micro-enterprises. There were noticeable changes with

regard to the relationships of the young mothers with their spouses and other community members. They received financial and emotional support as well as advice, especially from fellow women in the VSLAs. Being part of the livelihood strengthening programme altered the gender relations in the affected households. Many young women felt being financially liberated from dependency on their husbands, being respected by their husbands and fellow community members and having increased decision-making power because of their participation in the VSLAs.

In view of these findings, the following recommendations should be considered. Health Child should dedicate more efforts to addressing the reluctance of some men to allow their wives to join the VSLAs. They should specifically raise awareness to the effect that stopping women from joining VSLAs is a violation of their participation rights. Men's insecurities associated with participation of women in the VSLAs should be addressed through education and awareness training to promote gender equality, prevent gender-based violence and to enhance women's reproductive autonomy. The Ugandan government has advanced gender-mainstreaming efforts in the second National Development Plan and stipulated the rights of women as a marginalised group in the Constitution. However, the government's responsibility in implementing policies remains largely inadequate because the welfare of women and children is solely provided by families, communities and NGOs. It is suggested that the Ugandan government takes increased responsibility for improved policy implementation and programming for vulnerable populations such as women and children. Lastly, further research should be conducted targeting young mothers below the age of 18 as these are significantly marginalised and unsuccessfully targeted in this study. This research is also nearly entirely based on the testimonies of the beneficiaries of an NGO; therefore, it is important to study other community groups that were not receiving support from the NGO and to use other research approaches and designs for purposes of triangulation and replication.

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Part II | Children and Youth in School and Care Contexts

Chapter 7

Educational models and pupils' perceptions of educational outcomes in traditional and non-traditional primary schools in Uganda

Paulina Santos Alatorre[1] and Firminus Mugumya[2]

Abstract Different educational curricula and traditions influence teachers' and learners' practices, which subsequently lead to diverse learning outcomes. This chapter is based on an exploratory case study that examined the influence of educational models on pupils' beliefs and attitudes towards education in Kampala, Uganda. Pupils' resilient attitudes and perceptions about education were compared among pupils in educational settings implementing traditional and non-traditional curricula in Uganda. The findings show that educational models influenced children's preferences concerning learning strategies and future perceptions as well as resilience regarding academic and personal challenges. In conclusion, pupils' perceptions of education and its influence on their future were largely shaped by cultural and social values as well as the educational models emphasised in different school contexts.

Introduction

Education is a complex process in which different actors interact to determine learning outcomes. Different curricula and their associated education policies and traditions have a bearing on teachers and learners (Lambert, 2014; Laursen, 2015; Sayed, 2013). Traditional methods of education have long been the dominant pedagogic strategies in education systems. They promote a teacher-centred and text book-oriented approach and usually focus on areas of knowledge with little opportunity for group activities, discussions, experimental exercises or practical use of theoretical knowledge. The responsibility for teaching and learning is mainly on teachers; learners have to be present to listen to the teacher's explanations and examples to acquire and use the imparted knowledge. Learners are expected to passively receive and internalise information through memorisation; the learners' examination results often depict their capacities (Boumavá, 2008; Michel, Cater, & Varela, 2009; Stewart-Wingfeld & Black, 2005 in Michel et al., 2009; Sungur & Tekkaya, 2006).

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Non-traditional educational models, unlike traditional educational models, allow creativity, leadership and active learning as key learning/teaching principals (Lukman & Krajnc, 2012; Michel et al., 2009; Robinson, 2010). There is use of different models of instruction in which learners share responsibility and reflect on their own learning. Learners have an active role in constructing their knowledge through creative, exploratory and dynamic activities that require discussion, participation and teamwork as well as reflection and implementation of academic learning in problem-solving. In non-traditional educational models, a teacher acts as a facilitator and uses strategies such as collaboration, creativity, leadership, problem-based and child-driven learning among others (Lukman & Krajnc, 2012; Michel et al., 2009; Sungur & Tekkaya, 2006). The importance of non-traditional approaches then lies in the possibility of encouraging and empowering children to cooperate and actively solve their problems and challenges. They positively impact on creativity, collaborative work and critical thinking and their use has been discussed as a protective factor for the development of a growing mind set and resilient attitudes (Boumavá, 2008; Lukman & Krajnc, 2012; Michel, Cater, & Varela, 2009; Mitra et al., 2010; NACCC, 1999; Pawlina & Stanford, 2011; Robinson, 2010; Salborn, 2014; Scott Yeager & Dweck, 2012).

People's perceptions and beliefs involve not only cognitive, social and behavioural skills, but what one can do with the skills acquired. Perceptions influence thinking patterns, behaviour, and emotional reactions in different situations. Studies related to resilience, perseverance and grit point to children's personal attributions: self-efficacy; positive beliefs and beliefs about effort; emotional resources; positive images about themselves; attributions for their setbacks; and learning strategies in the face of setbacks. Other results highlight the importance of expectations from caregivers and educators, classroom management and relationships with teachers and peers. Likewise, the following studies (Blackwell, Trzesniewski & Dweck, 2007; Bernard, 2004 & Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001, both in Hamilton, 2012; Kim, 2014; McWilliams, 2015; Scott Yeager & Dweck, 2012) have emphasised the importance of educative environments that favour positive self-beliefs and a sense of accomplishment that focus on achievements during the learning process and not only in the final examination marks.

The concept of mindset has been defined as a person's basic belief about learning and ability (Dweck, 2000 & 2006 in Ravenscroft, Waymire, & West, 2012 p. 707). It is usually independent of other situational variables and determines how people regard targets and how those influence self-evaluations and performance. In addition, it determines the kind of social comparison information and affects cognitive, affective and behavioural responses to comparisons (Johnson & Stapel, 2010, p. 704). Dweck (2009, pp. 8, 9) defines two different mindsets, namely fixed and growing mindsets. A fixed mindset implies that the concerned person thinks that intelligence is simply fixed while a growing mindset suggests that the concerned person thinks that intelligence can be developed. In her theory, Dweck (2009) explains how people's beliefs influence their achievements and how these beliefs are usually formed within the dynamics inside the classroom. Previous researches have demonstrated that helping learners to develop a growing mindset

promotes constructive behaviours, leads to higher attributions of success and promotes perseverance through failure, setbacks and challenges (McWilliams, 2015; Scott Yeager & Dweck, 2012; Sriram, 2010). Hence, psychological characteristics such as self-perceptions, beliefs and mindsets are associated with resilient attitudes. Resilience in the context of this study was viewed not only as the capacity to overcome risky circumstances or adversity, but also as the ability to develop proactive attitudes. These allow pupils to face failures, overcome and learn from mistakes, use the experiences as a source of personal growth and continue trying to reach their goals (Dweck, 2009; Laursen, 2015; Mullen, 2010; Pawlina & Stanford, 2011; Scott Yeager & Dweck, 2012) 2012).

With the introduction of the Universal Primary Education programme (UPE) in 1997, Uganda became one of the first African countries to have eliminated tuition in public primary schools. This policy development resulted in a huge increase in enrolment of pupils in schools. However, the increase in enrolment is yet to be matched with quality education. The introduction of the "Thematic Curriculum" in 2007, which promotes a child-centred approach and competence-based learning instead of memorisation (NCDC, 2010 p. xvi) was a promising intervention but this has remained on paper. Schools still face challenges in terms of low internal efficiency and unequal quality of education with over-age enrolment and high dropout rates. Teachers' terms and conditions of employment are still poor, notwithstanding the lack of training to handle new child-centred approaches to learning. Grades are still perceived as the proof of learning and the performance of children and schools is entirely measured through an exam-based merit system. Failures are "assumed" to be those learners who cannot or will not complete a university degree (Nishimura, Yamano, & Sasaoka, 2008; Salborn, 2014; Tamusuza, 2011; Vermeulen, 2013, Meinert, 2009 in Salborn (2014)).

Study methodology

Ecological and social constructivist perspectives informed this study. It employed an exploratory comparative case study design using qualitative methods of inquiry. Data were collected from three different schools: (i) a local public primary school, (ii) a private primary school and (iii) an international primary school,[3] all situated in Kampala, Uganda's capital city. Schools were implementing either the Ugandan primary curriculum or a combination of British curriculum and international primary curriculum. Public and private schools represented an educational setting involving traditional educational models, while the international school represented an educational setting involving non-traditional educational models.[4]

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3   Private and international schools were both privately owned. The international school mainly targeted foreign children and offered education based on international standards. A few Ugandan children were enrolled in the international school. From this point on, schools will be referred to as public, private and international.
4   A definition of traditional and non-traditional educational models was created based on the

In each school, six learners and one teacher from grade 6 (Primary 6) were inter-viewed, resulting in 18 interviews, with pupils (nine boys and nine girls) and three teachers.[5] It is important to mention that conditions among the three participant schools differed not only in the type of curriculum, but also in the number of pupils and the quality and quantity of facilities, as well as the economic and academic con-ditions of pupils. This diversity reflects interconnection of different elements and the importance of researching the implication of educational methodologies and influential circumstances. Data were collected by the means of semi-structured in-terviews and using an interview guide. The interview guide comprised relevant topics and was flexibly applied (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). Interviews were transcribed and analysed using thematic and content analysis. Themes in-formed by the study objectives emerged from the data. The researcher adhered to the following ethical values during the study: doing no harm to participants, ob-taining informed consent, ensuring participants' anonymity and confidentiality of the collected information.

Findings and discussion

For this chapter, three themes concerning children's perceptions of education and its influence on their resilient attitudes emerged from the data. These themes are (i) group work or memorisation, (ii) children's perceptions of educational models and (iii) the meaning of being a good pupil.

Group work or memorisation? Assets or constraints?

Is not really nice learning if you are not having fun. Because if you are not having fun in learning then you will be really sad, grumpy and moody (Lukas, International school)[6]

Ricci (2013 in Laursen, 2015) and Kohn (1999 in Salbon 2014 p. 43) report that tradi-tional educational models inhibit curiosity for learning because grades reduce the interest in learning and tend to spoil the human relationships among classmates. In the private and public settings, the idea of working individually, sitting and memo-rising what the teacher said was the dominant concern among participants. Class-rooms were arranged in a way that all children faced the board, with chorus repetition and signalisation of "correct" and "incorrect" answers as implemented

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available literature. During the interviews with children and teachers, questions were asked with regard to activities undertaken in the classroom and how they were conducted, allowing for categorisation of public and private school under the traditional educational model and in-ternational school under the non-traditional educational model.

5   For this chapter, only findings from interviews with pupils are presented.

6   To assure privacy to participants, all names were changed and no information that could lead to their identification is presented. Similarly, the use of a "name" and indication of school during quotations, indicate that the quotation corresponds to a pupil.

learning strategies. This arrangement exemplifies the stereotype of a passive learner who is viewed as a receptor and repeater of what the teacher says.

Memorising was assumed as one of the main and most important activities because it allowed pupils to retain what might be asked during exams. Nevertheless, when children in these schools were asked about the practical application of things they learned at school, their only argument pointed to the utility to get better marks in the exams, without giving any other applicable outcomes beyond examinations results.

> You have to sit and memorise what teacher says; that way you can get it in your head because there will be exams (Daniel, Private school)

> We should discuss only the work that teachers have given us, so that we can revise, and when the teachers come to ask us questions, we will have the answers because we will have revised (Miriam, Public school)

Our findings show that the educational model in which children had been immersed influenced their perceptions of the schools, teachers and learners' characteristics, influencing on their beliefs — and most likely their behaviours. In general, pupils had positive perceptions of their actual educational models. However, perceptions differed in content. Pupils in the traditional settings viewed school as a place to perform individual academic work, memorise and repeat what teachers taught. On the contrary, children in the non-traditional settings described school as a place to explore, cooperate and learn from mistakes. Among pupils from public and private schools, the idea underlining their preference for a traditional education model was related to the importance of passing exams. If pupils assumed passing exams was "the" important characteristic of education, it will be more likely for them to develop a fixed mindset, valuing "looking smart" over learning (Dweck, 2009), perpetuating a culture that values memorisation, and exam results instead of analysis, critical thinking and creativity.

Children in the public and private schools mainly associated the term "group work" with self-organised activities during their free time (such as playing sports) because the amount of class work impeded the undertaking of other activities. There was also a dominant attitude manifesting: "*it is not allowed to work with classmates during class time*". In the private school, pupils who held a higher position, such as group leaders, prefects or their friends were more likely to participate in the classroom. Nevertheless, in the public school,[7] participation was not related to involvement or discussions about academic activities, but mainly to actions to ensure discipline in class or helping teachers with the necessary materials and tasks, including signalling pupils who spoke during the teacher's absence, being responsible for cleaning, or distributing items to the class.

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7   Even when both schools were considered under the traditional model of education.

> I would like to perform better. I am still a young child, I am in P6, I want to… I really do not know (…) some of my classmates (can participate and talk about the things they are interested in), but I do not get a chance because I am so scared, ... I think teachers and some of my classmates will laugh at me. Sometimes, most of my classmates [laugh at me] (Anna, Private school)

> Sometimes I can be the leader. Because I am a friend to most leaders, I can give ideas (Anthony, Private school)

> I participate in class ... They (teachers) give me some opportunity to write those who are talking in class (…); sometimes I am responsible for those who are sweeping the classroom. (...) sometimes they send me for chalk in the staffroom (Benjamin, Public school)

Even when pupils in schools implementing non-traditional educational models identified advantages of group work (such as benefiting from classmates' abilities, gaining extra support when missing some important information), they reported that they perceived serious disadvantages of this strategy. These included missing teacher's explanations or obtaining negative results during tests and evaluations.

> If teachers ask questions (and you are in teams), when you want to give the answer, the other one gives it first, then you are not learning. Only the other pupil who has answered the question is learning. That is why I want just to read and learn by myself and that is what I always do (Daniel, Private school)

Pupils from the international school who usually studied in small groups reported positive characteristics alluded to by pupils in the public and private schools about teamwork. These include the opportunity to talk with friends, compare answers, help each other and produce better work.

> It is just nice to study together instead of sitting there memorising everything. (…); they are kind and they help me when I do not understand the question or so (…). Most pupils in my class also get my advice when they need it (Sofia, International school)

> It (group work) makes learning fun as you learn to cooperate in a team with everyone giving ideas so you can produce better work (Lukas, International school)

Children's positive perceptions of collaborative learning and teamwork are comparable to the findings reported by Lukman and Krajnc (2012) who stated that collaboration among learners influenced obtaining better learning achievements during the education process and non-traditional learning methods made the educational process relaxing, interesting and less tiresome. Likewise, it is assumed that a positive perception about personal effort can favour the development of a growing mindset and resilient attitudes; and activities implemented in non-traditional environments may offer a bigger opportunity to foster and develop these beliefs

and attitudes. Furthermore, Hall and Pearson (2003 in Pawlina & Stanford 2011 p. 30) reported that children's perceptions of mistakes and difficult situations have an impact on their self-concept and on how to handle future situations. Therefore, perceptions of mistakes as an opportunity for growing and learning more or perception of mistakes as something to be ashamed of will shape learners' mindset about school and affect their own abilities and opportunities in the classroom setting.

Children's perceptions of educational models

Regarding the activities developed inside the classroom, children from the three schools reported that learning in small teams was a means of sharing information, getting support, benefiting from each other's abilities and achieving improved performances. In the public school, it was associated with giving/receiving emotional support among pupils. Nevertheless, pupils from the public and private school described this strategy as disadvantageous, mainly associating it with the possibility of missing teachers' explanations, disturbance for teachers and "stealing of ideas" from fellow learners. These disadvantages depicted that pupils could not perform well in future exams.

> If I sit with my friends, we will not be able to hear what the teacher is teaching (...); I would prefer to sit and memorise what the teacher says (…); it (memorising) helps me to get better results in exams (Oscar, Private school)

> You have to sit and memorise what the teacher says; that way, you can get it in your head because there will be exams (Daniel, Private school)

Pupils from traditional and non-traditional school settings reported differing perceptions regarding making mistakes in their studies. For those in the traditional school settings, mistakes were perceived as something to be ashamed about, while for the pupils in a non-traditional school setting, mistakes were perceived as an opportunity for growing and learning more. These different opinions about the same situation highlight how pupils' perceptions and mindsets about school could affect their learning abilities and opportunities. It is important to note that different education models promoted diametrical differences regarding interpretation of situations that children faced continuously during their educational journeys and lives.

> To be a good pupil you need to work hard, do not make mistakes, always be serious with your work and never disturb the teachers (Daniel, Private school)

> If we get them all wrong (the answers), we learn our mistakes and correct them so we know that topic. We learn a lot about that (Matthias, International school)

As mentioned earlier, in the public and private schools, memorisation to pass exams was reported by nearly all pupils. These pupils believed that listening unconditionally to teachers represented good conduct in class. Thus, in order to pass exams, it was important to follow the activities and models implemented in the school. By assuming that teachers were the ones with knowledge, it was necessary to do whatever they required of pupils. Pupils from international schools in contrast regarded school as a place to explore, cooperate, and learn from mistakes as part of their daily activities.

> I do not like playing in class and disobeying the teachers, because when you play, you cannot understand. You do not come to school to play but to learn (…). When they (teachers) give us free time, we can play but when it is time for class, we focus on learning (Miriam, Public school)

> Group work makes learning fun and you learn to work in a team with everyone giving ideas so you can produce better work (Lukas, International school)

> *Children's perceptions of academic competences: What does it mean to be a "good pupil"?*

As reported by Eccles and Wigfield (2002 in Zhang, 2012 p. 46), expectations are closely related to achievement performance and are influenced by individual interpretations of previous achievements. Positive perceptions of one's ability to succeed can facilitate healthy adaptation, while negative self-perceptions can have emotional and behavioural consequences for pupils (Marino, 2014). Consequently, it is assumed that some pupils were aware of their capacities and willing to develop them further, which represented an element of positive adaptation. However, pupils who found difficulty in evaluating their competences in a positive way or who lacked confidence to express their point of view found their adaptation undermined in a traditional educational setting, which unduly emphasised competition among pupils and giving "correct" answers.

Participants in this study evaluated themselves focusing on the current self and using information from the environment (Johnson & Stapel, 2010). Hence, the idea of being "a good pupil" was determined by standards promoted by the academic and social discourse and against which pupils compared themselves. This is interesting because even if the characteristics of being a good pupil were similar in all three schools, teacher instructions and "expectations" against which children compared themselves differed.

At the international school, pupils found it easy to identify their capacities and abilities, and wished to develop these further. Compared with pupils from the other schools, pupils in the international school were aware of their positive characteristics and mentioned them to justify their answers without bragging about them. Some of the expressed opinions include: *"I try my best"; "I am good in the subjects in classroom"; "I study quite hard"* or *"I am usually quite good"*.

In the case of pupils from the private school, characteristics of a "good pupil" were related to their abilities and behaviour during class such as *paying attention, working hard, and making improvement.* Some were ambivalent towards their position of being a "good pupil". They reported that they needed to "level up" or "perform better". Some of them reported that they felt anxious to "upgrade themselves" or worried about "not being clever enough".

> Yes, I think I am a good pupil but I need to level up (…); People are nice but I am a bit scared. (…); I am very scared if I am going to upgrade myself (…); and the bad thing about me is that I am not really clever. Ok yes, I am clever, I can perform well but sometimes I cannot (…); I wish I become very clever (…) (Anthony, Private school)

Pupils in the public school viewed their good academic performance as a manifestation of being "good pupils". Such academic performances included accomplishing tasks required by the teacher, showing dedication to learning, concentrating in class and being respectful.

> To be a good pupil you need to work hard; do not make mistakes, always be serious with your work and never disturb teachers (Daniel, Private school)

> To be a good pupil, it is necessary to never (argue with) a teacher, (…). And if they tell you to do something just do it straight away and follow your personal learning goals (Elias, International school)

For children in a non-traditional school context, success in future achievements meant relying on an internal locus of control, while for participants in the traditional school settings, both internal and external loci of control were necessary to accomplish their expectations. In fact, pupils in both educational settings considered personal effort as a necessary element for achieving future goals. However, pupils from traditional educational settings were emphatic that personal effort and believing in God would help them to succeed.

> I can pray to God so I can reach my goals, and I also study hard (Benjamin, Public school).

> I should concentrate on my books (to make my dreams real) (Oscar, Public school)

> I try really hard, I can achieve the things I want (…). (I have to) work hard, believe in myself, be respectful. I'm quite good at those things and if I really try hard and be resilient and don't give up, I can get it (Lukas, International school)

Growing mindset and resilient attitudes

Equal access to education remains a primary goal worldwide. However, it is not enough to focus on access and completion; these are just the first steps towards the

bigger, desirable education outcomes. The quality of teaching and learning are crucial for developing resilience among the learners. Thus, education should address not only the cognitive but also emotional and social needs of learners; it should prepare learners to innovate, test their abilities, inspire others and eventually address social inequalities (Mitra, 2005; Mitra, Leat, Dolan & Crawley, 2010; NACCC, 1999; Robinson, 2010).

When comparing benefits associated with non-traditional educational models with the traditional ones, the main finding in this study is that prospects for children in public and private schools were not as positive as for children in the international school context. However, Pride (2014) noted that personal characteristics and interpretations play a significant role in children's outcomes, and concluded that learners who want to take ownership in their learning will find a way to appropriate meaningful learning, even in restrictive classrooms. Nevertheless, it is necessary to provide resources and environments that facilitate more children developing a growing mindset and resilience attitudes. Children with less social or economic resources will benefit from tools that develop a growing mindset and resilient attitudes due to their influence on academic efforts, achievements and social mobility (Paterson et al., 2014).

Findings in this study support the idea that interventions to promote a growing mindset and resilient attitudes are not only important but also necessary. Programmes to promote a growing mindset and resilient attitudes could also be implemented in traditional educational settings that adopt a traditional educational model, precisely addressed to minimising consequences that this model can have for children's creativity and critical thinking (Boumavá, 2008; Dweck, 2009; Lukman & Krajnc, 2012; Robinson, 2010). Nevertheless, it is important that interventions include training for teachers on how to promote a growing mindset and effective ways of praising children. As expressed by Pelley (2014 p. 18), "If we want to produce the best learning outcomes, we must teach learners to be aware of how they learn and which of their learning skills are in need of strengthening".

It is important to clarify that not all pupils from non-traditional educational settings will necessarily develop a growing mindset. Likewise, not all pupils from traditional educational settings will manifest a fixed mindset. However, it is important to highlight that the activities implemented within non-traditional educational settings such as sharing of knowledge, critical thinking and participation interact in a feedback process to foster a growing mindset.

Conclusion

In view of the findings discussed above, we conclude that children's perceptions of educational outcomes were shaped by cultural and social values as well as by the educational models implemented in different school contexts. Pupils held positive perceptions about the educational models in which they were immersed and preferred to continue under the pedagogy of the actual model that was being implemented in the respective schools. However, reorienting the education system in

Uganda towards the non-traditional educational model will generate significant personal benefits for pupils, schools, families and the country at large both in the short and long term. In particular, the non-traditional educational model has the capacity to facilitate the development of a growing mindset and resilient attitudes among pupils. Under the non-traditional educational model, pupils were being prepared to freely interact and engage with fellow pupils, their teachers and other social systems beyond the school settings. They were also likely to be creative, innovative and socially mobile. These educational outcomes were not predicated on the traditional educational model. A non-traditional educational model is thus a protective factor because it develops resilience among children, not only as a way of overcoming difficult circumstances, but also as an attitude towards life that can be taught, practised and developed. Despite the benefits of the non-traditional educational model, its wide implementation in Uganda was likely to be undermined by the lack of resources in public and private schools and by the pressure exerted on teachers and learners in public and private schools to achieve excellent examination-related results. Gradual changes in educational policies should be considered and specific interventions designed targeting teachers, learners and other stakeholders to promote a growing mindset and resilient attitudes among pupils by engaging the latter in non-traditional educational activities and learning strategies. These findings add to the paucity of knowledge regarding educational models and their influence on learning outcomes in Uganda.

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Chapter 8
Understanding interprofessional collaboration
A case study of professionals in a norwegian primary school

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Abstract To ensure equitable education for all children, collaboration has become a fundamental feature of inclusive schools. In Norway, such schools are popularly described as "one school for all". Professionals with diverse qualifications are employed in schools to achieve the goal of providing equitable education for all children. The aim of this study was to examine how various co-located professionals, including ordinary teachers, special needs teachers, nurses, social workers and social educators collaborated in an inclusive school. A qualitative descriptive case study involving in-depth interviews was conducted in a primary school in Norway. Using purposive sampling, two ordinary teachers, a social worker, a special needs educator, a social educator, a nurse and a school principal all working in one school were selected for this study. Findings show that the professionals were positive about interprofessionalism and shared a common goal of working together to provide equitable education to all children. At the informal level, professionals had strong ties that were a source of social and emotional support. However, issues of power and status inequality were also reported and were likely to undermine team spirit and collaborative practice among the professionals. These findings suggest important implications for interdisciplinary social work practice with regard to concerns such as teambuilding, professional development, staff motivation and rewards systems.

Introduction

Collaboration is a fundamental feature of inclusive schools worldwide. Such schools in the Norwegian context are popularly described as "one school for all" (Booth & Ainscow, 1998). In the Education Mirror report of 2012 published by the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, it was stated that in the autumn of 2011, 52,972 learners in primary and lower secondary schools received individual decisions on special needs education. Notably, the report highlighted challenges related to sociocultural factors associated with the presence of newly immigrant minority children and learning difficulties, physical impairments and behavioural disorders due to the increased number of children with special

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needs. The complex needs of children required collaborative practice of teachers and other professionals to serve them effectively.

Recruitment of various professionals such as teachers, social workers, special needs teachers, occupational therapists, nurses and psychologists to collectively address children's needs was inevitable and necessary in Norway. Lawson (2003) stated that collaboration of professionals was essential to meeting every child's needs. The author also stated that collaboration could ensure positive educational outcomes for at-risk children within schools. Similarly, Friend and Cook (1990) reported that there are a variety of configurations in schools, both formal and informal, within which collaboration can occur. Friend and Cook's observation shows that, for instance, ordinary and special education teachers may work collaboratively to meet the needs of learners with disabilities and ensure equality and inclusion of all children. More than anything else, establishing teams of professionals to help learners who are having trouble is crucial; however, the creation of positive working relationships among professionals is noteworthy.

Interprofessional collaboration is relevant beyond contexts such as classrooms, to include the entire school, families and the community. Apart from school settings, interprofessional collaboration can take place in contexts such as hospitals and other service-oriented institutions. Moreover, interprofessional collaboration is now regarded as an important modern way by which organisations exhibit growth. This is because it facilitates professionals learning from one another and promotes high-quality decisions by the professional team. Indeed, issues of great public concern such as child abuse, poverty, special needs, emergency and health problems, etc. are too complex to be effectively addressed by only one category of professions.

Despite its demonstrated utility, many challenges often undermine interprofessional collaboration. For example, management is sometimes worried about staff solidarity and organising, which might culminate in formidable interest/pressure groups and exert significant demands such as better working conditions and increased wages. In addition, differences in training, functions, values and expectations of professionals at times make it impossible to have common goals and undertake collaborative practice. Hill (2012) has reported that working with children who have complex needs is challenging and thus requires a team of professionals who are committed, confident, willing and able to engage children at different levels of the intervention process. Not all professionals are prepared to tolerate the uncertainty and contradictions that often arise in undertaking protracted work such as this. For example, special needs teachers may not be effectively prepared for collaborative practice with diverse stakeholders in the school system. Such professionals were thus unlikely to contribute effectively to interprofessional collaboration or to benefit significantly from it.

In view of the above contextual issues, the aim of this study was to examine how different professionals collaborated to meet complex needs of children in the context of a primary school in Norway. This study was not focused on describing the already documented importance of interprofessional collaboration but to examine how it occurred and the practices that constituted it. Therefore, this study

fills this specific knowledge and research gap regarding interprofessional collaboration in an inclusive school context in Norway.

Methodological approach

A qualitative descriptive case study design involving one primary school in Norway was conducted. For purposes of confidentiality, the school where this study was conducted is given a pseudonym, Fjorden. Fjorden employed diverse professionals including teachers, occupational therapists, social workers, nurses and social educators. Because it employed a wide range of professionals who formed a strong interdisciplinary team, Fjorden was capable of providing general and specialised support to the children. Professionals implemented the following two major programmes for the school: (i) the After School Programme (ASP) which supported pupils from the first to the fourth grade as well as pupils with special needs from the first to the seventh grade and (ii) the Alternatively Customised Training (ACT) programme, which provided special training for pupils with major and complex learning difficulties. According to the principal, the school had a management team comprising himself, two inspectors, an assistant rector, two ASP leaders and an ACT professional manager. Heads of departments supported the principal in overseeing implementation of the school's activities.

Data were collected using open-ended interviews with seven professionals (three males and four females). These professionals were categorised as two ordinary teachers, a social worker, a special needs educator, a social educator, a nurse and the principal. Interviews with all the participants were conducted in their respective offices. The data collected were analysed using the thematic analysis method. Data analysis involved reviewing transcripts to develop codes that described the narratives, and undertaking an analytical ordering of the codes to make sense of the relationships between themes that emerged.

Main findings and discussion

The following themes emerged from the data: (i) collective responsibility for all children, (ii) practice of integrated service provision, (iii) reflection, (iv) professional partnerships, (v) flexibility, (vi) interdependence and mutual autonomy, (vii) confidentiality and professional identity and (viii) status differentials and power relations.

Collective responsibility for all children

Participants reported collective responsibility as a major feature of interprofessional collaboration. Collective responsibility was undertaken with the aim of addressing every child's needs and was related to what is often described as the "Every Child Matters Agenda", or "Leaving No Child Behind" and "One School For All" (Booth &

Ainscow, 1998). These slogans have been used in many studies to refer to equitable and inclusive support for all children regardless of differences associated with, for example, their gender or having a disability. Certainly, participants' views showed that they were concerned with ensuring equitable treatment regardless of children's needs and abilities. For example, in the ordinary teacher's account, various professionals collaborated to share responsibility for supporting every child. For instance, some professionals identified children in need of specialised services and referred them to the special needs team (comprising social educators and special needs teachers). As a team, professionals discussed and made plans for working together in helping each child. With regard to early problem identification, professionals often undertook joint needs assessments of the children, which were then followed by undertaking joint interventions.

> I had one child with many social problems that did not find a place in the classroom and needed help from the special needs teachers. Other children have attention problems and look tired throughout lessons. Then, I informed the special needs teacher and we decided that she would follow up the child in the classroom to assist them to learn. We do a lot of talking about ways of helping and addressing problems of children (Ordinary teacher with 15 years' experience)

Certain collaborative practices which needed collaboration among professionals emerged from the issues identified. Ordinary teachers used terms such as 'pupils who do not do well in class', 'pupils with attention problems', 'those who look tired in class and those who were affected by domestic violence'; issues that required interventions from different professionals such as social workers and psychologists. In addressing such problems, professionals indicated that they consulted with and referred children to fellow professionals for specialised care and support. Although nearly all professionals agreed that they collectively shared responsibility and worked well with each other, ordinary teachers and special needs teachers appeared to work more collaboratively than with other professionals. Sharing responsibilities among the professionals depicted aspects of the interdisciplinary collaboration model (Bronstein, 2003) in which regular communication among different team members is of paramount importance.

The practice of integrated service provision

The presence of different professionals influenced the modes of service delivery; hence, the development of an integrated approach. With the integrated service provision approach, professionals stated that they considered effective ways of providing various services together, at the same time and for all children. Professionals also stated that integration of services strengthened their professional identity and shared understanding of the values of interprofessional collaboration as well as building relationships between professionals and children and among children. In this regard, a nurse with 10 years' experience stated:

> Here, we are lucky that we can walk around and talk, discuss and do things together concerning helping children with other professionals. The advantage is that we can organise something together as professionals to help the children. For example, as nurses we have collaborated with teachers and social workers to educate the same group of children on sexual and reproductive health, overweight, hygiene and general health.

The professionals had appropriate opportunities for harmonising their plans for effective delivery of services to children. The presence of fellow professionals was an opportunity to consult and exhibit teamwork in advancing the values of equity and inclusivity in the school. The links and connections that took place among professionals similarly demonstrated the systems theory. The findings also show that the integrated service provision approach eliminated dangers of labelling that usually cause stigma and discrimination among pupils. The services were provided to all children unless there were special cases in need of attention from the special needs teachers. To respond adequately to the needs of all children, the entire team was required to show commitment towards realising shared goals.

Reflection

The professionals were mindful of adhering to reflection procedures in the school to be able to provide equitable education to all children. The practice of attending staff and departmental meetings to reflect on practice was common to all the professionals. They held and attended several meetings to address issues that occurred in the school such as bullying and other antisocial behaviours which were adverse to the well-being of children and required collective solutions. Besides addressing general issues, meetings helped professionals to refresh their minds by reflecting and sharing challenges, successes and learning best practices from one another. Furthermore, meetings provided the opportunity to comment on each other's ideas and practices and discuss new ways of supporting children. Reflection in this context entails modelling of openness to criticism and receiving feedback from colleagues and other stakeholders. The professionals did not view differences in views and perspectives as a barrier to their collaboration but rather as the right of expression, which needed to be respected. Indeed, this consideration demonstrates that there was a strong interprofessional value of mutual respect among the professionals. For example, a social worker with 9 years' experience stated:

> We respect the opposing views of others, which may be different from our own perspectives. What matters is the willingness to share what you know with others.

Professionals reflected and commented on each other's views and opinions but what mattered most was learning and reaching the best possible solutions of ensuring equity in serving all children. Brabeck (2003) reported that it is from such ways as critiquing each other's views that professionals learn to work together to

meet needs of children and youth, particularly when they are drawn into a partnership that requires effective communication. In the context of reflection, the present study shows that critical reflection as a key feature of interprofessional collaboration necessitated strong values such as being committed to collaborative practice, keeping time, being trustworthy and exhibiting openness when serving children.

Informal networks and communication

Although the professionals stressed the importance of formal communication to support interprofessional collaboration, informal meetings were also reported as important. Participants consistently reported how they informally communicated with each other to find better ways of addressing every child's needs in the school. For example, a special needs teacher with 8 years' experience stated:

> We talk together; it happens in an informal basis, e.g. during break time, having coffee. We text each other, and sometimes you meet someone in the corridors, and say … hey, there is this, and that…you are going to do this, and I will do that…

Professionals thus adopted suitable means of communication, which were both formal and informal and used them effectively to work interprofessionally. Moreover, informal means of communication have their own strengths in promoting collaborating partners. It seemed that for the ordinary teacher and special needs teacher, it was by adoption of informal communication that working together in the classroom became meaningful.

What was somewhat striking in this study was the role of informal reflections, which appeared more important than expected in a formal agency such as Fjorden. Research suggests that each form of communication has its own conventions, strengths and weaknesses; therefore, practitioners must become skilled across the communication spectrum (Hammick, Freeth, Copperman, & Goodsman, 2009). The current study indicates that the central purpose of communication in collaborative practice is to facilitate the sharing of information to help the service users; and informal ways of communication were appropriate in some respects. Besides, most informal reflections happened between close team members who had overlapping roles and who shared professional orientation and behaviour management responsibilities (Friend & Cook, 1995).

Professional partnerships: co-teaching

Co-teaching also emerged as another important feature of interprofessional collaboration in the school. The ordinary teachers and special needs teachers frequently reported co-teaching because quite often they were together in the same classroom. Co-teaching has been defined as a practice by which two professional educators deliver substantive instruction to a diverse group of learners, including those with disabilities, within a single space, typically a shared classroom (Friend & Cook, 1995). There were various views reported by the ordinary teacher and the special

needs teacher that reflect the above definition of co-teaching. An ordinary teacher with 15 years' experience explained:

> The special education teacher follows the pupil in the classroom because the pupil cannot take care of him/herself. It is too much work for the teacher alone. Therefore, we are always together helping each other and the special needs teacher acts as an assistant to the special needs children…

Evidently, the ordinary teacher and special needs teacher had a common role that required them to share ideas and strategies in an interprofessional way with the focus on meeting the diverse and unique needs of each child. Their collaboration was based on proper coordination, communication and sharing responsibility at every stage of practice to ensure that the educational package met the learning needs of all children.

While participants reported that co-teaching was beneficial, sometimes it hindered interprofessional collaboration as the following account of the special needs teacher with 8 years' experience shows:

> The most important challenge is being integrated into the classroom situation. From my point of view, it is quite okay for people like me but some other members of my department feel that it is awkward. They say they do not feel part of the classroom because there are no clear guidelines or enough preparations.

Existing policies in Norway show that it is very important for collaborating professionals to nurture their relationships with the people they most directly deal with. The above account suggests the possibility that values support, creativity, reflective dialogue, teamwork and personal feelings in collaborative teaching as stressed by the Norwegian education policies. Moreover, recent research has shown that many teachers have been socialised to work alone, and collaborative work requires different types of communication and skills which many lack (Danforth & Smith, 2005). In addition, while many teachers were asked to collaborate in inclusive classrooms, they usually received inadequate guidance on how to go about this practice (Friend & Cook, 1995).

Flexibility: adapting to interaction and communication styles

Most of the professionals' accounts show that they understood each other's ways of communication. By saying they adapted to communication methods, they were actually referring to familiarisation of different communication methods used during collaboration. It was found that professionals did not communicate anyhow; they had communication values that were considered very important to ensure the sharing of knowledge and information. There were thus preferred means of communication which everyone had to adopt or adapt. While stressing interactions and adapting to communication styles, a special needs teacher with 8 years' experience illustrated:

> Although it does no harm to receive a text or a phone call from the teacher about children with special needs, I prefer meeting in person and talking about it because sometimes people are not clear when they send a text.

The above comment did not imply that informal communication was not useful but at times, it was hindered by some barriers such as the lack of clarity of information shared. Adapting interactions among the professionals was paramount to address the needs of all children effectively. Studies show that choosing a suitable means of communication and using it effectively is a vital part of working interprofessionally (Hammick et al., 2009). However, the authors argue that each method of communication has its strengths and weaknesses; and collaborating partners usually have their preferred means of communication.

Adapting to new practices and roles

Professionals reported having learned much from each other; in particular, the ordinary teacher and special needs teacher kept their professional boundaries open and allowed their roles to overlap. According to the participants, sharing responsibilities and knowledge was a means of learning and helping each other to reach the common goal of ensuring equitable education for children. Below is an illustration from an ordinary teacher with 11 years' experience.

> I work with special needs education teachers because they take care of children with special needs in the classroom as I focus on the rest of the class. When the special needs teacher is absent, I step in and work with the social educator or I handle all the work alone to ensure continuity

Collaborating professionals demonstrated interest in learning from each other, which necessitated adapting to emerging practices and roles. While it was evident that many professionals adapted to new practices and learned from each other, there were those who did not consider this move as desirable. The social educator in particular wanted to keep close to her job rather than spending much time learning what others were doing. Barrett, Sellman and Thomas (2005) argued that demands of interprofessional collaboration and other changes to the working environment could cause a great deal of anxiety, which often lies beyond the conscious awareness of the affected individuals (p .30). Yet, individuals who tend to adhere to their specific job descriptions and do not undertake collaborative work prevent agencies and professionals from sharing knowledge and decision-making capacities and ultimately undermine the quality of services provided (Hill, 2012).

Interdependence and mutual autonomy

Some professionals such as the ordinary teachers depended on other professionals' abilities to conduct referrals, assessments and complete specific tasks in supporting children. Interdependence depended on having effective communication,

healthy interpersonal relationships and respect for each professional's job to reach particular goals. For example, as earlier shown in co-teaching, ordinary teachers and special needs teachers showed significant practices of interdependence; their success in teaching all children in class depended heavily on their friendly working relationships. The following quotation illustrates this working relationship:

> We have individual plans but those plans must fit into other people's plans. If you work alone, sometimes it affects the majority of the people you are working with. For example, I make my own plan and the teacher makes her plan, but we are often together sharing how our plans will meet collaborative goals. This does not only happen between me and the teacher but it occurs across all professional categories. One individual's activities must depend on another's activities. (Special needs teacher with 8 years' experience)

Professionals exhibited interdependence because they respected others' contributions to collaborative practice. Professionals were aware of their own specific responsibilities and roles and those of fellow professionals in the school. Participants in this study noted that succeeding in each one's job depended on other professionals also being successful in their own jobs. This modus operandi was attributed to the need of all professionals to effectively contribute to meeting complex needs of children. While interdependence was widely accepted and cherished by most professionals, differences at times occurred between professionals. Such differences were attributed to factors such as professionals' contrasting preferences for ways of helping children. Yet, differences among the professionals were viewed as more healthy than destructive because they fostered a wider perspective on issues and gave professionals the opportunity to learn from the best practices of fellow professionals. Studies have referred to this described state of affairs as mutual autonomy, which is contrasted with individual or traditional autonomy (Royeen, Jensen & Harvan, 2009). The concept of mutual autonomy is essential to interprofessional collaborative practice. For example, Hill (2012) reported that professionals were required to recognise each other's unique competencies to foster reliance on each other's work to achieve joint objectives. In instances where mutual professionals develop individual or traditional autonomy, a false sense of unity in the group is developed which diminishes interdependence and the collective efforts of professionals (Royeen et al., 2009).

Confidentiality and professional identity

Participants reported that accepting interprofessional values operated as the guiding principle for effective collaboration among professionals. Professionals emphasised that accepting the values enabled them to focus on the common goal of providing equitable and inclusive education to children. For example, a nurse with 10 years' experienced stated:

> We endeavour to work outside our profession's boundaries and to accept other professionals to effectively help children in need. I think that is why we are all here. However, we are challenged when it comes to sharing information…

Whereas all professionals appreciated collaboration, it was uncomfortable when they were expected to share sensitive information with fellow professionals. Sharing valued information provided by their clients contradicted the profession's promise of ensuring confidentiality. Because their jobs placed much emphasis on keeping confidentiality, the nurses particularly found collaborative practice with other professionals challenging. In this regard, a nurse with 10 years' experience illustrated:

> Other professionals do not always see that we have this strong confidentiality value; they want us to tell everything but that is not according to our professional requirements.

The nurse appeared to be sure of when it was appropriate or not to share sensitive information about clients. In circumstances where breaking confidentiality created undue risk for clients, nurses were unlikely to share information required by fellow professionals. It is thus clear that respecting interprofessional practice and at the same time adhering to professional values created ethical dilemmas, particularly for the nurses. The nurse in the context of this study was concerned with what was alternatively described as "defending my professional practice by honouring the value of confidentiality". In a few cases, adhering to unique values of the professionals was contrary to the demands of interprofessional collaborative practice among diverse professionals. Indeed, previous research has shown that each profession is defined and bounded by its practices, knowledge base, philosophies and values (Hammick et al., 2009).

Status differentials and power relations

Participants reported that professionals negotiated individual roles taking into account the roles of fellow professionals and the overlapping nature of such roles. Working in a co-located inclusive school setting necessitated that the professionals adopt values that were essential for optimal collaboration. However, professionals who regarded their statuses as lower than others were concerned about power and status inequality. In particular, special needs educators reported that they often did not see themselves as "professionals in the partnership" because teachers who controlled the majority of the children often overlooked their contributions. A social educator with two years' experience commented:

> We can have different views on what is the best way because some professionals are in a position to think about all the children. Then you have me with a small perspective on one child. Yes, I know that it is their job as well, but it becomes difficult because you do not have enough contribution to make.

Evidently, different professionals determined their roles and functions regarding serving children in the context of collaborative practice. However, professionals who had great responsibility and functions regarding helping the children also had greater power and status than the professionals with less of these. Power and status inequality were thus a risk that was likely to hinder interprofessional collaboration. Moreover, if team members held conflicting beliefs regarding their status and power, they were unlikely to continue working together (Barrett et al., 2005). In the present study, individuals who felt marginalised in interprofessional collaboration also reported losing confidence, morale and motivation to work with others. Yet, confidence and morale are essential to the success of interprofessional collaboration. In cases where confidence and morale are lost due to concerns such as status and power inequality, an "attack on of professional identity and autonomy" is experienced (Barrett et al., 2005).

Conclusion

The above findings show that different professionals in Fjorden built strong working relationships based on values such as trust and openness that enabled them to support each other effectively as they strived to provide equitable education for all children. Collaboration was not limited to the works of the professionals within classrooms; it also occurred throughout the entire school setting. Because of collaborative practice, professionals accomplished more than what would have been possible if they had worked individually. Certainly, as individual professionals, they were incapable of effectively addressing complex needs of the children in Fjorden. Similarly, they do not individually translate "one school for all" into reality. Despite the above exciting experiences, there were challenges that were likely to gradually undermine the success of interprofessional collaboration. Notable among these were power and status inequality among different professionals and requirements for some professionals to adhere strictly to values such as keeping information on clients confidential. The school management should pay dedicated attention to addressing such challenges to uphold the values of mutual interdependence and cooperation among the diverse professionals who serve children.

Collaboration in public organisations such as Fjorden emphasised the use of formal structures such as functional teams, departmental meetings and training workshops. In addition, formal networks and communication means were adopted. In fact, Fjorden was a highly formalised agency with formal systems of which there seemed too many. However, it was striking to find that professionals strongly valued informal structures of communication and social support along with the formal structures and systems. According to the professionals, informal networks and systems were as important as the formal systems and networks in contributing towards interprofessional collaboration and to meeting needs of the children. The municipality and other authorities that monitored and evaluated impacts based on formal records and structures should be aware that informal structures within a formal

setting such as Fjorden School significantly contributed to meeting the goals of having inclusive education in Norway.

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Chapter 9

Typologies of childhood social relations among young people in care settings in Portugal and Nigeria

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Abstract This chapter examines typologies of childhood concerning social relations of young people in SOS Children's Villages in both Nigeria and Portugal. The study examines the existence, significance and implications of mother-child relationships with biological parents and foster mothers. The theoretical basis of this study is provided by the life course approach, attachment theory and the caregiving system theory. A comparative qualitative research approach was used to collect data via storytelling by 12 fostered children. The collected data were analysed using content analysis. From the data, young people experienced five typologies of childhood relationships. The study findings indicate that the role of the mother figure cannot be overemphasised among children who had faced adverse situations early in life. However, this suggests that to an extent, the outcome of subsequent phases of development of young people is dependent on their interactions with caregivers, mothers and others who have direct custody during childhood. Thus, there is a need to acknowledge the uniqueness of each child in a care setting and the importance of listening to children for successful transitional phases and trajectories. It further suggests that a caregiving system must assess foster carers and approve them via social services.

Introduction

The history of childhood unravels experiences of children in different ages before the new paradigm of childhood. The concept of childhood in the Middle Ages through the 19th century was of a political concern characterised by everyday struggle, where children remained insignificant as a social class, lacking visibility except for vulnerable children with physical disabilities or delinquents (Alanen, 1988; Qvortrup, Corsaro & Honig, 2009). Aries (1962) describes childhood as inconspicuous during the Middle Ages; however, some of the literature of the time paid special attention to children's minority status, rights and fragility and called for the protection of children. The history of childhood is full of nightmares, which we are just waking up to. In general, the present life of children was neglected, and commentators focused on expectations and the goal of becoming an adult (Alanen,

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1988; Prout & James, 2003; Qvortrup, Corsaro & Honig, 2009). Childhood was more or less confined to children's socialisation, existing in the family. Briefly, childhood was inconspicuous in history. However, in contemporary society, childhood studies and children's social well-being have gained attention (Qvortrup, et al., 2009). For instance, children's well-being indicators have been identified based on material situation, education, children's relationships, health, subjective well-being, civic participation, housing risks and safety (Bradshaw et al., 2007). Thus, these indicators can serve as a guide to reiterate the significance of childhood in our days and analyse common problems of children.

To this extent, the relationship of children in care is of utmost importance to this study and it behoves any society and family to provide every child with a conducive care-giving system for their holistic development and optimal social interaction with society. It is crucial to check the existing relationship of children admitted into care due to adverse life situations as well as their interactions in their new environment with foster mothers in particular. Few studies have portrayed the relationships that exist between foster mothers or parents and foster children (Mayes, 2017; Höjer, 2009). For instance, children in care, especially in SOS Children's Villages, are raised in familial settings with foster mothers. Thus, this paper reveals the family dynamics that exists in SOS Children's Villages in Nigeria and Portugal by interviewing 12 fostered young people on their childhood experiences in care.

An overview of situations of children

Today, childhood is viewed as a social construct recognising children's right to express their view and acknowledgment of intergenerational relationships influenced by cultural contexts (Woodhead, 2008). It is very significant to know that human beings exist in relations (Coleman, 1988).

Generally, around the globe, material situation, education, relationships, health, subjective well-being, civic participation, housing, risks and safety of children are crucial indicators in understanding childhood (Bradshaw et al., 2007). Alanen (2009) and Kroll (2006) have specifically explained the fact that the uniqueness of childhood is dependent on parent-child relationships and interactions. Silverstein and Bengston (1997) identified five typologies of parent-child relationship as the tight-knit, sociable, intimate-but-distant, obligatory, and detached relationships. This implies that the relationship between parents and children is an important factor on which other indicators can be explored.

Of emphasis in this study is the existing relationship between foster mothers and foster children. According to Coleman (1988), foster care can be a source of social capital existing in relationships. A foster home is a part of the social structure established in order to facilitate children's protection against actions by the family of origin that have placed the child at risk, and further provide what these children lack. According to Singer and Berzin (2015), the foster care experience is regarded as the turning point for an individual who has been confronted with adverse situations, but not without its attendant cumulative advantages and disadvantages

(CADs). This indicates that sustaining a relationship for an individual foster child is important for his or her life trajectories. However, for children in care, the relationship with foster mothers seems to exist in a formal approach where opportunities and support from foster parents tend to exist after leaving care (SOS Children's Villages, 2012). Mayes (2017) found out that the relationship of children with birth parents was higher when compared with foster parents and their foster children. The factors that could be responsible for this may include child vulnerability.

SOS Children's Villages (2012) established that relationship with biological parents, foster parents, foster siblings and duration in care as factors that could affect the exploration of resources provided for children in care. In addition, SOS Children's Villages (2012) in their peer research in four European countries found that children in residential care easily turn to family members than children in family-based care. This implies that children who lack intimate or close relationship with foster parents may lack the ability and skills for their next phase of transition into adulthood. In fact, research has shown that when these children grow into adolescents, they find it difficult to relate and seek emotional help from biological parents (Höjer, 2009; SOS Children's Villages, 2012).

This could imply that they never had an intimate relationship during childhood and as result, child vulnerability can set in. According to Jans, (2016), child vulnerability is the exposure of children to a negative outcome and its attendant shocks. Children in care complained about their exposure to different life-building skills, which could prepare them for life after care (while in care) (SOS Children's Villages, 2012). In fact, while some children in care adequately explore the opportunities of education and establish strong social networks, others refrain from the available opportunities that could positively influence their future because they live on the negative outcomes of stigmatisation and low educational status, among others (Luster, et al., 2010; Adeboye, Guerreiro & Hojer, 2017).

Child care systems in Portugal and Nigeria

The care of foster children is influenced by child-friendly policies such as formal support and welfare state provisions, culture and informal support. Child-friendly policies such as a child welfare system still exist in the majority of developed countries ranging from universal, liberal to Mediterranean (Gilbert et al., 2011). In Portugal, Aboim, Vasconcelos and Wall (2013) stated the importance of welfare provisions for vulnerable groups as opposed to informal relationships. They argued that the latter might encourage social inequalities because those in need of much support may get less and it does not compensate for social differentiation. The formal approach to providing care for children outside the biological family employs the subsidiarity principle. The subsidiarity principle in the context of childcare states that intervention of children outside biological family proceeds in successions, that is, from the principles guiding intervention to ensure the child's best interest and privacy from individual entities to community level and finally to court intervention as the case may be.

However, Bawin-Legros (2001) argued that formal support could not replace intergenerational family relationships. Intergenerational family relationships enhance close ties to compensate for crises and budget deficits in welfare states and in situations of increased life expectancies (Bawin-Legros, 2002). A major concern about these formal and informal provisions in developed and developing countries is the 2008 global economic crisis, which has affected the world, but to varying degrees. Besides economic strength, the care of children outside their biological families is also influenced by the culture of the country. For instance, Portugal being a developed country is influenced by an individualistic culture, which cherishes independency of its citizens. Another difficulty faced by foster children in formal settings is living in multiple care placements. Multiple care placements can trigger cumulative behavioural problems in children (Dumaret, 1988; Höjer, 2008; Höjer & Sjöblom, 2011; SOS Children's Villages International, 2010).

On the other hand, Nigeria is governed by a collectivistic culture and rearing children is solely communal-based (Adeboye, Guerreiro and Höjer, 2017; Exenberger & Juen, 2014). Care of children occurs through family, marital and kinship responsibilities. Furthermore, unlike in Portugal, the care of children outside their biological families in Nigeria is solely provided by the extended family system. The implication of this is that the social capital of family is very significant to the care of children. Family members, especially parents, provide financial and moral assistance to their children and do not usually turn away in times of need. However, in recent times, the family has increasingly become nuclear in nature, and kinship ties do not readily provide alternative care for children outside their biological families.

Nigeria was identified as one of the 41 countries that have no legal programme anchored in legislation for children; rather, it offers a general welfare programme in terms of health and educational needs for children (ILO, 2014). The majority of children at the grassroots level have no access to sufficient education. Today, the burden on the family is enormous to cater for vulnerable and marginalised children especially with the economic crisis and poverty situation in Nigeria. As a result, Nigeria is faced with social capital and capital resources to care for children's well-being (Ogundipe and Edewor, 2012).

Theoretical framework

This study adopted a life course approach, which advocates the sequence of socially defined events and roles that an individual enacts over time (Giele and Elder 1998, p. 22). It assumes that through social institutions and organisations, there are social trajectories and developmental pathways for individuals guided by six key principles: socio-historical and geographical location, timing of lives, heterogeneity, linked lives or social ties to others, human agency and personal control, and how the past shapes the future (Elder, 1994). The life course approach is important to this study because it is useful for international research and cross-cultural studies.

This study also adopted attachment theory (Bowlby, 1988), which states that people usually maintain proximity to an attaché figure to ensure survival and

reproductive success. Attachment theory focuses on the early social and emotional attachment and interactions between children and caregivers, which influences the children's later relationships. This theory describes two main types of attachment which children develop, that is, the secure attachment and insecure attachment. These types of attachment imply that children experience childhood in different ways. Besides secure and insecure attachment, some children develop ambivalent attachment, avoidant attachment and disorganised attachment. Bowlby (1988) noted that in order to promote a secure base for children, caregivers need to offer intuitive understanding and respect for the child's attachment behaviour. Taking this further, George and Solomon (2008) used attachment theory to illustrate the caregiving system of parents. George and Solomon describe the caregiving system as a behavioural system and an active approach to nursing of children. This approach could make children become quieter, withdrawn, hostile or loved depending on how active or passive mothers relate (George & Solomon, 2008). Thus, the relationship existing between caregivers and children can be reciprocal in nature.

Relating this to the study, the caregiving system provides insight to the family practices and behaviours of children depending on the existing parent-child relationship (Morgan, 1999; George & Solomon, 2008).

In summary, the theoretical framework takes into consideration the significance of the life course approach, attachment theory and caregiving system to understand the existing relationship between foster mothers and their foster children. Although the life course approach seems to be holistic, it is not sufficient in explaining the existing relationship in care. However, to focus on children's relationships, it is interesting to apply the three of the six principles of the life course approach. These are socio-historical and geographical locations of children, human agency and linked lives. The history of children will help reveal their relationship before coming into care through the events that occurred to them in time past.

The caregiving system is crucial to the development of children in care. The caregiving system stresses the need to go beyond seeking protection for children as in attachment theory, but for caregivers (foster mothers) to further provide protection, comfort and care experiences during childhood as their ultimate goal and function (George & Solomon, 2008). It can be understood then that these experiences can be good memoirs if children are free or have a good relationship tending towards secure attachment or of bad memories tending towards insecure attachment with foster mothers (George & Solomon, 2008; Adeboye, 2015). As such, the caregiving system depicts that the caregiving environment can be psychologically stable or hostile, stressful, accommodating or rejecting depending on children's experience with caregivers. In this system, children establish relationships through the principle of linked lives or social ties to others. Linked lives or social ties to others have a cumulative advantage for children because no one can survive outside social relationships. Children in care have direct contact with many people such as SOS mothers, biological siblings or fellow children living in care, SOS staff, peers in schools, friends, teachers and others within their sphere of contacts. Thus, the relationship of children with others is better understood through their day-to-day activities in which they relate to other people, such as SOS mothers, SOS siblings and

teachers. These people may represent social capital because these relationships give support to children in one way or another; "social capital inheres in the structure of relations between actors and among actors" (Coleman, 1988: p. 5). In addition, the relationships children establish determine considerably how they explore the available opportunities or have personal control over their lives, which is referred to as human agency. Outcomes of children in care and domains can be determined by the interaction between linked lives, human agency and caregiving environment (Bailey, et al., 2011; Adeboye, Guerreiro & Hojer, 2017). Furthermore, integrating attachment theory can provide information on the type of care that can promote either a secure or an insecure attachment between children and foster mothers.

Methodology

The study adopted a qualitative research approach that provides insight into the social relationships that existed between foster children and foster mothers as children voiced their childhood experiences with caregivers and other established social relationships. This approach gives a clue to understanding the social reality and social worlds of children. The study was conducted in SOS Children's Villages of Bicesse and Lagos in Portugal and Nigeria, respectively where children are provided with a stable environment for their development.

Selection of participants

Twelve young foster people were selected from a population of people who are living in care. The only criterion for selecting these young people was to have part of their early childhood years spent in a foster home. Six participants were selected from each SOS Children's Village. In total, 12 participants, 6 males and 6 females, were involved in the study.

Data collection and data analysis

Data collection was carried out via a narrative approach where the young people told their story of childhood. A semi-structured interview guide was used to guide the story telling of the young people's childhood experiences. Each narrative lasted an average of 20 minutes. The story was recorded; thereafter, the recorded information was transcribed.

The data collected was analysed using content analysis in a stepwise action. This included developing the code frame, transcription of the audio-recorded interviews, reading thoroughly to generate codes, establishment of existing relationship between codes, labelling codes for categories, exploration and interpretation of results.

Ethical consideration

A consent form was signed by the young people based on their availability through the gatekeepers in Portugal and Nigeria. In addition, since it would have been difficult and unethical to interview vulnerable children at a tender age, the researcher interviewed young people on their childhood experiences. The researcher used pseudonyms to present the peculiarity of some stories told by young people.

Findings and discussion

The Nigerian and Portuguese participants sustained different relationships during childhood, especially with biological parents and foster mothers.

Childhood relationships with biological families

In general, half of the participants relate to either biological mothers and/or aunts or uncles. Participants did not report relationships with their fathers even when some participants knew their fathers. This lack of relationship with fathers was the case of one of the participants from Nigeria (Gybee) and the remaining three participants from Portugal (Cath, Abi and Matheus).

In Portugal, the existing relationships between participants and their biological parents when they had access to them were not intimate. In fact, two of the participants reported that their experience was deliberately detached from the biological parents and that they kept a distant relationship during their childhood days. The possible reasons were identified in the cases presented below. Even some of the children (Pedro and Abi, and Matheus) could seek out alternatives in overcoming the situations they were exposed to by begging on the streets.

> I have contact with two of my three sisters; I do not want to speak with her (mother). The first time my mother and father came to see me, [thereafter] they did not come anymore. I do not want to see them because I do not feel an emotional connection. (Matheus, a 19-year-old male from Portugal).

> I do not speak with her (mother); I do not want to speak with her because I think she made a mistake. Then, why make the same mistake repeatedly leading to seven children that she cannot take care of? It is like being stupid without knowledge and doing it a second time and repeatedly — it is as if you are stupid. (Pedro, a 22-year-old male from Portugal)

However, it was impossible for five of the Nigerian participants to sustain relationships with their biological families because they did not know their real biological father, let alone their family background. The exception to this was Gbenga, who knew both parents but was unable to identify with them. The reason for this was not disclosed.

The cases narrated above indicate how the young male participants were resentful of and annoyed with their biological parents, especially their mothers. Therefore, the relationship that existed between the children and their biological families was insecure and avoidant. Thus, insecure attachment existed among male young people due to lack of emotional attachment and detachment during their childhood days. This corroborates Bowlby's (1988) theory of attachment of feeling of insecurity among children without emotional ties with parents. However, the young female participants exhibited good relationships with their mothers during their childhood. But this was not reported as an intimate relationship and also suggests insecure attachment.

However, only one of the young female people reported that she knew her father, was very intimate with the mentally disturbed mother and had a tight-knit relationship with all her immediate family members. This strong relationship exhibited by 19-year-old Cath demonstrates secure attachment according to Bowlby (1988).

> My case is different from other children in SOS because before my father died, he put me and my brother and sister in the SOS. My sister left SOS at 21. She has just completed her studies and now she works in a cosmetology store. I have one brother living in London. But another brother I have so much contact. I have not seen my brother for 11 years.... (Sad) I do not know. Since the first day I came here, I have talked with my family; I never stopped talking with them. We speak on phone and I go home for holidays (Cath, Portugal)

Cath's case shows that although she had a tight-knit relationship when she was with her family members, now her relationship with family members is an intimate-but-distant relationship. This is because Cath's relationship with family members had become distanced, especially with one of her brothers, who she saw last about 11 years ago. Therefore, it can be concluded that some young people in care had a tight-knit, sociable and intimate-but-distant relationship with family members. Distance is not a barrier to a secure relationship and the gap of distance can be bridged through social capital of loved ones and social media. This finding conforms to the findings of Mayes (2017), who stated that the relationship of children with their birth families was greater when compared with the relationship with foster parents and their foster children. In addition, the ill health of Cath's mother rendered her helpless and lacking anyone to care for her in the biological family. Parents' ill health was a major cause for separation between parents and their children in care (Dumaret, 1988; Adeboye, Guerreiro and Hojer, 2017).

Another important finding was that different relationships existed between young people as children and their biological siblings. Many participants reported having a good relationship with siblings; others were selective in their relationship with siblings. The following relationships were identified as tight-knit and detached among participants in the two countries of study (Silverstein and Bengston 1997). However, from these experiences, it can be deduced that the social relationships that existed with biological parents are of two perspectives of childhood, turbulent and helpless childhood relationships.

Turbulent childhood

These children are affected by societal parameters of ecological systems of global, country, society or family incapacitation causing a barrier to their holistic development. SOS Children's Villages (2012) reported that children in foster or residential care fall within this category. These children experienced unrest and insecure attachment with biological families at a tender age. It implies that these children are active when they experience turbulence with attachment figure and lived unenjoyable and pathetic experiences before their admission into care as they lacked physiological needs and protection (SOS Children's Villages, 2012, Adeboye, 2015; Adeboye, Guerreiro and Höjer, 2017).

Helpless childhood

These children become vulnerable due to economic constraints and ill health of their parents. Biological parents deliberately detached and distanced themselves from their care responsibility. Children are passive and are helpless because they tend to be too young — less than one year old in care. In fact, parents view these children as passive beings who have no agency (Elder, 1994). Such children are abandoned by parent(s) and can be found as helpless beings on the streets, hospitals or with social security. Thus, children in care are not orphans who have lost both parents but social orphans due to parents' incapability to nurture them (Adeboye, 2015).

Thus, childhood before admission into care depicts insecure attachment, distance and detached relationships.

Childhood relationships with foster families

The study also examined the relationships with SOS family including foster mothers (SOS mothers) and siblings (foster siblings). In this regard, all the participants reported having intimate or detached relationships with one or more foster mothers who provide care for them.

In Nigeria, only two of the participants reported a very intimate relationship with their foster mothers (Tolu and John) while in Portugal, five participants had intimate relationship with their foster mothers.

Intimate childhood relationship

Participants that experienced these relationships made a cogent transition into care from families of origin or relations while depending on caregivers for better lives and outcomes. Thus, they received help at a very tender age. Beyond this, they were able to relate to foster mothers and siblings. They engaged in household chores and the village life with their foster families. Cath narrated that she loves her foster mother very much and cannot do without her. Others commented as follows:

> My mother influenced my education pathway. I do not do anything without inform-
> ing her. She disciplines me and gives me good counsel. She contributed to where I am
> now. (Pedro, a 22-year-old male university student, Portugal)

> I love my mum so much; we interact and talk about everything (Gefra, 19-year-old fe-
> male university student, Portugal).

These expressions show the importance of mothers in the lives of children. Bowlby
(1988) asserted that intimate relationships provide a secure base for children to
grow. This also supports George and Solomon's (2008) view of a non-hostile
caregiving environment, which can help parents understand the behaviour and
character of their children.

Detached childhood relationship and the causes

During childhood days, young people were majorly affected by the need for a
change of mother. The need for a second foster mother was reported by partici-
pants based on the foster mother's retirement, ill health and death, or their inability
to cope with the system and foster children among others. These aforementioned
bases for leaving fostering appointments have in one way or another affected rela-
tionships between foster mothers and foster children. Usually, this relationship
ends abruptly and without preparing the foster children for the new life with the
foster mother. Thus, four of the participants (Andrew in Portugal and Tolu, Yomi
and John in Nigeria) experienced the sudden termination of relationship with fos-
ter mothers during childhood, thus leading to the difficulty in adjusting with the
new foster mothers.

> I do not like my new mother, we were not close (Tolu, 30-year-old female, Nigeria)

> … I do not like my first mother nor the second mother; I hated her. She never liked
> me… only the fifth mother was my real mother (Andrew, 19-year-old male, Portugal)

> My foster mothers keep complaining about everything I do. They do not see anything
> good in me. I do my things the way I like and go to the SOS Children's Villages to play
> with my friends. (Yomi, 27-year-old male, Nigeria)

Yomi also reported his experience with the two subsequent mothers, which never
yielded any positive relationship and thus he found it difficult to be emotionally
and securely attached throughout his stay with the mothers in the foster home.

The narrated experiences show that the more mothers a child has to relate to,
the more detached the relationships and sense of insecurity with them. This im-
plies that there is need to prepare foster children for a new relationship because
they are active beings with their own agency. This corroborates the findings of
Luster et al. (2010) that personal agency and contextual supports determine transi-
tion into the subsequent phase of life among vulnerable children. Research has

often reported a lack of preparation to face the new phase of life or development (Stein & Verweijen-Slamnescu, 2012).

Matil, a 19-year-old female from Portugal reported how her relationship was not intimate.

> I am not ready to be close to any mother; she got tired of me and left me alone and I sneaked out partying.

Her reason was that she had lived in temporary institutions before her admission into SOS Children's Villages. This shows how multiple care placements can trigger cumulative behavioural problems in children (Dumaret, 1988; SOS Children's Villages International, 2010).

In Nigeria, Bose also reported her second mother preferred some siblings. Andrew who had up to five mothers to care for him during childhood. He referred to the first four women as not mothers but the fifth woman as his real mother. However, only Andrew´s experiences appeared to differ with all the mothers, except for the last mother who he was securely attached to. This is because he was able to develop attachment and connection with his last mother. Furthermore, biological parents make it difficult for children to relate to foster mothers. Pedro, sharing his experience, said,

> … I do not have to learn how to love, we were born to love mum naturally… Right now, I don't trust anyone, even with my foster mum. Imagine, when I came here the first day, it's difficult because I guess my experience makes me not to trust any more.

This indicates the roles of mothers as carers and once they fail in their role, children are negatively affected as mistrust sets in and therefore, relationships with several others become impaired. This alludes to Erickson's (1950) first stage of psychosocial development that trust may be difficult to establish if caregivers or dependants fail to meet up to the expectations of children. Foster children's expectation is trust in mothers or caregivers in meeting their physical and emotional needs among others so that they can have hope to trust others, otherwise social relationships may be established on mistrust.

Thus, preference for other children, multiple placements and multiple mothers and biological parents are causes of detached relationships among foster mothers and foster children. The disadvantage of detached attachment is the fact that it can affect the subsequent roles and events as children grow up (Bowlby, 1988; Elder, 1994; Giele & Elder, 1998). For instance, such children may be unable to identify or explore the available resources and opportunities without secure connection with their linked lives.

Relationships with foster siblings and outsiders

Different relationships existed among participants with SOS mothers as identified by Silverstein and Bengston (1997), which include sociable, intimate, close, distance and

detached relationships. Related to siblings, all the Portuguese participants related to one and/or more of biological siblings during childhood while in care. All the participants in Nigeria had few friends in school during primary school. The possible reason deduced for this was the fact that they all had their primary education in the school within the SOS Children's Villages. Thus, participants were limited only to school friends they had access to interact with during childhood. This can limit children in the exploration of available resources within Nigerian society when compared to Portuguese participants whos schools were outside of the SOS Children's Villages. However, their perceptions about the outsiders suggest the same relationships occurred except for Matil and Pedro. Matil stated that she interacted only with her SOS siblings but had friends outside the caregiving system she can relate to.

Relationships of foster children based on interactions with foster mothers and several others

The experiences of foster children with foster mothers, siblings, peers and biological parents culminated in four types of childhood in care relationships: happy, moderated, frustrated and restrained.

Happy childhood — They seemed to be holistically balanced. They removed barriers by blocking any connection to linked lives that can hinder their happiness such as detachment from untrusted family members or friends. They were active actors during the narration of their experiences. Although they had a turbulent childhood, their foster mothers play an active role in their lives.

Moderated childhood — They have the ability to sustain the few linked lives they have and are very committed to caregivers and siblings. However, they feel comfortable with whatever they have and do not seek friendship outside. In fact, initially they may not want to know anything about their family of origin because of the lasting impression they had while in care. So, they can easily feel disappointed when they are neglected or abandoned to survive alone. Later on, there is every possibility that these children may go in search of their family of origin or biological relatives when the people they once relied upon are no longer supportive.

Frustrated childhood — These children are denied a happy childhood while in care. They experience harassment from caregivers. They have more than two caregivers while in care and cannot grow holistically since their rights as children are denied. They may be physically maltreated and denied food for physical growth. They are not emotionally attached to caregivers because they lack affection. In order to suppress their feeling of resentment, they may engage more in vocational work, drawing, or other activities that keep them going and being on their own.

Restrained childhood — Children experienced multiple placements in different settings. These children tend to keep to themselves while in care because they feel lonely and are not emotionally attached. Their experience of parental preference for a child may lead to mistrust for developing close relationships due to their disappointments in those they trust. Thus, they deliberately detach themselves from their caregivers and others within close contact and have more links in society than in care systems. They are more comfortable trusting outsiders than insiders who

can betray them. This alludes to Erickson's (1959) first stage of psychosocial development that trust may be difficult to establish if caregivers or dependants fail to meet the expectations of children.

Conclusion

Different relationships seem to exist between mother and children within and across the countries of study. Biological parents cannot sustain the care of their children due societal factors beyond them. This study has been able to establish that there is an interplay between the history and biography of young people through the exploration of their relationship with their biological and foster parents and the effects on their life trajectories (Morgan, 1999). Some children had a turbulent, helpless, happy, restrained, moderated or frustrated childhood due to the mother-child relationship and interaction. Thus, the need for a better strategy on how caregivers, foster mothers, social workers and care organisations relate to children and handle sensitive matters related to each child cannot be overemphasised. The study recommends the need to comprehend the uniqueness of each child in a care setting. Furthermore, this can influence state policies and global policy development towards the holistic development of children in care.

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Chapter 10

Experiences of hope and aspiration among youth recipients of rehabilitation services from Uganda youth development link

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Abstract Most youths who experience social problems such as unemployment, substance abuse, human trafficking, and sexual exploitation usually succumb to despair and passivity. A few of them cope and exhibit resilience, hopefulness and ambition following experiences of adverse life events. It is not known how the youths who received rehabilitation services from a non-governmental organisation, Uganda Youth Development Link (UYDEL) in Uganda, responded following their experiences of significant social adversity. The aim of this study was to examine experiences of hope and aspiration among the youths who were receiving rehabilitation services provided by UYDEL for various traumatic experiences. A qualitative study was conducted with youths at UYDEL's Masooli rehabilitation centre, located in Wakiso district, central Uganda. The youths and social work practitioners were interviewed as primary participants and key informants, respectively. These were selected using purposive sampling techniques, which involved enrolling and interviewing the youngsters and social work practitioners until data saturation was reached. Data were collected using in-depth interviews and analysed using the method of thematic analysis. Our findings show that the formerly distraught youths experienced hope and aspiration in ways such as seeking ownership of highly valued possessions, exhibiting positive conduct and belief in supernatural interventions following the use of rehabilitation services provided by UYDEL. Factors such as the perceived availability of employment opportunities and provision of social support influenced experiences, hope and aspirations among the participants. Our findings suggest important implications for social work practice in the Ugandan context where children and youths comprise the majority of the population.

Introduction

Youths all over the world are living in environments that are increasingly insecure (Furlong & Cartmel, 2007). Social life is presently experienced by them in precarious ways in segmented settings. Social change is affecting the youth in ways that differ from those of previous generations. In the Ugandan context, they are grappling with

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such problems as unemployment, drug abuse, sexual abuse and exploitation, crime, HIV and AIDS, poverty and illiteracy (Kasirye, 2007). While it is common for many youths who experience social problems such as substance abuse and sexual exploitation to succumb to despair and passivity, some cope and exhibit resilience, hope and ambition. It is not known how the youths who were users of rehabilitation services provided by a non-governmental organisation, known as Uganda Youth Development Link (UYDEL), responded following their experiences of significant social adversity. While rehabilitation has a wide scope, it is often focussed on addressing specific problems among affected people. Rehabilitation services that were provided by UYDEL to the youths aimed at addressing their material, psychological and emotional well-being. The current study's aim was to assess experiences of hope and aspiration among young people who were receiving rehabilitation services from UYDEL, Uganda. Focusing on the positive aspects of their lives rather than on their problems was important in generating empirical evidence that may be used to support effective programming for a generally youthful Uganda population.

Theoretical framework and literature review

We adopted the strengths perspective as the theoretical framework for this study (Saleebey, 2006). The strengths perspective suggests that there is power in people and unique strengths can be mobilised and found in every person despite his or her circumstances. This perspective requires social workers to mobilise clients' strengths, which include resources, capacities and talents in the process of helping them to meet their goals, and thus improve their well-being (Saleebey, 2006). The strengths perspective is a paradigm that departs from traditional casework and the medical model, which focus primarily on assessing clients' problems and deficits. Problem-oriented approaches to social work intervention such as casework and the medical model unfortunately victimise clients and aggravate their problems. The strengths perspective does not deny existence of problems among clients but suggests that identifying capacities and strengths is essential to promoting clients' recovery. The belief that clients can recover and are resilient therefore characterises the strengths perspective in social work practice. The philosophy of the strengths perspective gives hope and possibilities in the context of even devastating situations such as deaths, violence and abuse (Saleebey, 2006).

Language is critical to the strengths-based social work practice; it forms the basis of the new lexicon of strengths (Saleebey, 2006). This lexicon includes three basic components, which are C, P and R. The letter C represents competence, capacities and courage; the letter P represents promise, possibility and positive expectations; and te letter R represents resilience, reserves and resources. All these words need to be considered by social workers when helping clients. Other important concepts suggested by the strengths perspective include empowerment and resilience. Because social work practitioners should empower their clients, there is a need for a collaborative work between them. Social workers should also focus on people and their environments while working together with clients to mobilise and

utilise the available resources. The concept of resilience is important in strengths-based social work practice; it implies that people can cope with and effectively manage adversity. Resilience is a process that is shaped by people's experiences of specific events (Rutter, 2000); resilience is consistent with concepts such as healing and wholeness that are also emphasised by the strengths perspective (Saleebey, 2006). Because this study focused on examining experiences of hope and aspiration among youths who had experienced diverse social adversity for which they received rehabilitation services from UYDEL, the strengths perspective provides relevant sensitising and analytical concepts that we adopted.

Further analytical concepts

Besides the strengths perspective, the following analytical concepts were used in examining experiences of hope and aspiration among youth recipients of rehabilitation services from UYDEL.

Positive youth development

Positive youth development is a "process of human growth through which adolescents progress from being taken care of to taking care of themselves and other people (Youth Development Strategies, 2000). In the context of positive youth development, policy, funding and programming are directed at providing support to them as they build their capacities and strengths to meet their personal and social needs. This approach emphasises promotion of emotional, social, and mental well-being of the youth. Positive youth development is characterised by the following key elements (Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003 cited in Barton & Mackin, 2012): (a) promoting competences and building positive connections with adults, peers, and community institutions. It also ensures a supportive and empowering environment that includes high expectations for positive behaviour; and conducting activities that create opportunities to build skills. Positive youth development is contrasted with the deficit-based approach to designing youth services (Mohammad et al., 2014). The deficit-based approach mainly focuses on medical personnel and clinical social workers fixing their problems rather than developing their strengths, capacities, and interests (Damon, 2004). Positive youth development implies that young people are not defined as broken, in need of psychosocial repair or as problems to be managed.

Hope and aspiration

Hope is a future-orientated expectation of attaining personally-valued goals. Hope gives meaning to life and is subjectively experienced and influenced by personal factors such as resilience and courage and external factors, such as availability of resources (Schrank et al., 2011). Hope enables the living to continue living and the dying to die with dignity (Dubree & Vogelpohlr, 1980). People who believe they

can influence their life circumstances usually cope with difficulties and achieve hopefulness, which in turn fosters their subjective well-being (Schrank et al., 2011). Titone (2013) reported three factors, which cause people to be hopeful, namely when they have skills in which they are confident; when they expect good things to happen based on their experiences, and when they are young. The young generally tend to look at the good side rather than the bad side of life because they have not yet witnessed many instances of wickedness. Moreover, Aristotle noted that young people usually expect the best from other people (Titone, 2013).

Furthermore, aspiration is a complex, thus difficult term to define. It can mean achieving something high or great, implying that it addresses future and present perspectives (Gutman & Akerman, 2008). Quaglia and Cobb (1996) defined aspiration as the "ability to identify and set goals for the future, while being inspired in the present to work toward those goals". Aspiration can be distinguished from expectation in the sense that aspiration suggests what a person wants to achieve and not necessarily what he or she will achieve (Flouri, et al., 2014). Aspiration implies having strong desires for achievement of ideals that have a great value for the individual (Ambrose, 2003). It manifests in the desires for accomplishments about aspects of life such as professional expertise, autonomy, personal identity and knowledge accumulation and serves as a directional ideal for long-term purposes, when it is strong enough to motivate an individual towards active pursuit of goals (Ambrose, 2003).

Methodology

A descriptive case study involving youth recipients of rehabilitation services provided by UYDEL at Masooli centre in Wakiso district, Uganda was conducted. A case study research requires researchers to undertake a detailed and contextualised examination of a limited number of cases or conditions and their relationships (Dooley, 2002). Because experiences of youths who were receiving rehabilitation services from UYDEL were regarded as complex, a case study research design was considered appropriate for us to engage with few participants and to learn in detail from their experiences.

UYDEL is a non-profit making, non-governmental organisation that was founded by a group of social welfare professionals in 1993. UYDEL's core programmes focus on (i) prevention of HIV and AIDS, care and support of patients; (ii) prevention of alcohol and substance abuse; (iii) child protection, including prevention and rehabilitation of children engaged in the worst forms of child labour; (iv) adolescent sexual and reproductive health; and (v) prevention of commercial sexual exploitation of children in Uganda. UYDEL's clients include children and youths who (i) are infected and/or affected by HIV and AIDS, (ii) live on streets, and (iii) are in contact with the law. Other clients include (iv) youths engaged in the worst forms of child labour (e.g. commercial sex exploitation and work that interferes with school attendance), (v) youths out of school, (vi) child mothers, (vi) children living in poverty-stricken (impoverished) households, and (vii) survivors of trafficking for labour and sexual exploitation (UYDEL,

2014). UYDEL runs several drop-in centres in Kampala and other districts including Masooli in Wakiso district.

Participants in this study were youths who received rehabilitation services from UYDEL. These services included vocational training in skills e.g. saloon hairdressing, catering and electric and electronic mechanics. Only those who had previously experienced child trafficking and lived on the streets were enrolled in this study. Two social workers were selected as key informants in this study. Ten youths aged between 14 and 21 were enrolled. Each gender, that is male and female, was represented by five participants. All participants were selected using the method of purposive sampling. Individual youths were enrolled and interviewed until data saturation was reached.

Data were collected from participants with the use of in-depth and key informant interviews. In-depth interviews were conducted to examine experiences of hope and aspirations among them, the things that they wanted to accomplish in order to reach their goals and the obstacles they perceived and what they wished to be done to remove obstacles to the realisation of hope and aspiration.

Key informant interviews were conducted with the social workers to complement the data collected from the primary participants. All the interviews were audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed verbatim. These interviews were conducted in a quiet room at Masooli rehabilitation centre and lasted between 45 minutes and 1 hour. The collected data were analysed using the method of thematic analysis (Braun & Clark, 2006). Data transcripts were coded and arranged in sub-themes, then developed in more abstract level themes. The themes were discussed in relationship with data excerpts and relevant literature.

Because of perceived vulnerability of youth participants, appropriate ethical values were adhered to in this study. In particular, informed consent was obtained from each of the eligible individuals by fully explaining objectives of this study and identity of the researchers. Potential participants were fully informed that participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw their participation during the course of the interviews. The collected data were kept confidential by storing them on computers that were password-protected. Participants' identities were kept anonymous; names were not included on the interview transcripts. Pseudonyms have been used where we felt a name was required in using the collected data. No further inquiries were made if a participant did not want to continue with the interview to prevent harm to participants. A quiet and private office was used in conducting interviews to ensure privacy to each participant. Finally, a soft drink was served to each participant as refreshment during the course of the interview.

Findings and discussion

Our findings show that the youths who received rehabilitation services from UYDEL following personal encounters with distressing life events experienced hope and aspiration in diverse ways. These ways were seeking ownership of valued possessions, exhibiting positive conduct and belief in supernatural intervention.

Seeking ownership of valued possessions

The youths reported that they hoped and aspired to acquire salaried jobs, earn much income and be self-employed as the following quotations illustrate:

> I want to be a lawyer. That is my dream and goal, which I am fighting for because I feel that within myself. I can help those who are hopeless. Therefore, I can be their voice. Yes. Sometimes when I look at my personal life, my mum is judging she and me neglected me. I do not know whether she was tired of me. I do not think it is the right thing to do (Jane, a 17-year-old female participant)

> Now I am studying hairdressing. If I learn how to do hairdressing, I will start my own business and begin earning money. My plan in five years is to have my money, not my husband. I want to have my own hair salon. I want to be a hairdresser. I do not want to be poor; I also want to be kind to other people. When you see needy young children, you should help them by taking care of them (Mary, a 16-year-old female participant)

Despite their experiences of significant adversity, the youths were hopeful to attain highly desired academic qualifications such as a degree in law or serving needy people. Apparently, social adversity had not crushed their resolve and hope to become advocates for marginalised people. For example, Mary was concerned with helping needy people, especially children, because of her heightened sense of empathy and altruism. Self-care was also highly valued by both the youths in this study. Being self-employed, in particular, was regarded as a means of living independently and helping needy people.

Working in their communities of origin was reported by participants to be especially important for those who were receiving rehabilitation services from UYDEL.

> I want to start working in my hometown so that I can help my mother. I want to be a mechanic because I can earn a lot of money in this job. There is a man in my town who is a mechanic. He is hard-working to the extent that he now owns a workshop. So, if I work hard, I can benefit from this training skill. I want to have a very big workshop in my hometown. In addition, I want to own cows and to make profit (Martin, a 14-year-old male participant)

The above account shows that Martin had strong interests in working and living in his home community to create employment and contribute to its socio-economic transformation. Moreover, Martin had a role model in his own community to emulate. He also exhibited self-agency and resilience in endeavouring to undertake practical action that involved meeting his own and other people's needs.

Being ambitious as the participants were in this study has been reported in previous studies on resilience and is comparable to the concept of aspiration. In general, aspiration has been described as a person's "ability to identify and set goals for the future, while being inspired in the present to work toward those

goals" (Quaglia & Cobb, 1996). The finding suggests that the youths reported varied kinds of aspiration and were sufficiently motivated to work towards realising their goals and dreams in the future (Gutman & Akerman, 2008). The Prince's Trust (2004) have similarly reported that having an interesting job, a nice home and making a lot of money were three important aims and aspirations of young people aged between 14 and 25 in the United Kingdom. It is surprising that such aims were prevalent among the youth in a low-income country such as Uganda who in addition had experienced traumatising life events such as sexual exploitation and abuse. It is also remarkable that the rehabilitation services they received from UYDEL's Masooli centre had influenced them to be optimistic following their previous devastating life experiences.

The youngsters in this study demonstrated resilience in overcoming the overwhelming stereotypes often associated with social adversity. Saleebey (2006) described resilience as the developable capacity to rebound or bounce back from adversity; such adversity may include experience of conflict, failure or at times positive events such as making progress and having increased responsibility. It must be noted that in addition to acquiring practical skills provided by UYDEL, the they had developed resilient attitudes towards life and become hopeful human beings who thought they could solve personal and societal problems. Moreover, resilience suggests recovery from traumatic life experiences and being proactive to learn by conquering life challenges which manifest in positive characteristics that the youths in the current study demonstrated.

Positive conduct by the youth

The youth recipients of rehabilitation services from UYDEL reported exhibiting positive conduct as another manifestation of hope and aspiration. In this regard, positive conduct concerned being a "good person" and the role of self-agency. The following quotations illustrate the participants' conceptions of being a good person:

> I want to go back to school so that I can realise my dream of being an engineer. I want to earn a lot of money because I want to build a house for my parents. I know that I have to be focused on my studies here. I work hard and I know that if I behave well, people will help me to find a job (Mark, a 15-year-old male participant)

> All of our clients want to be successful in their lives. That is why you see them learning vocational skills as a basic way of earning money; good money. There are quick ways of earning money such as being prostitutes and selling drugs. But these are not safe and cannot bring good money (Dean, a 28-year-old social worker)

These accounts suggest that the youths were ambitious and thoughtful in their career choices. In general, they preferred to pursue socially acceptable occupations to those that were socially despised. In addition, they regarded changing their conduct as a means to becoming better persons than they were prior to receiving

rehabilitation services from UYDEL. One participant reported that she was planning to modify her conduct as follows:

> I am a tough woman; I am very tough. If something goes on, which I do not like, I can just give you a bad look, which means, "Please leave". However, I do not want to be that tough to people. That is what I want to change in myself. I just want to be calm. If I behave in a cool way, I will be successful and people around me will assist me to reach my dreams (Maria, a 17-year-old female participant)

> I want to be a person who is admired. I want to be a business man because I do not want to be the person I was in the past. I am happy with the change here. I want to shift from poverty to prosperity. I want also to change the behaviour and discipline of other people because there some people who do not want to listen; they just want to fight others (Justin, a 16-year-old male participant)

The youths were not only concerned with personal changes of conduct but also regarded themselves as change agents for fellow community members. They viewed change in their conduct as essential for being successful persons in the future. Such a change of conduct would bring with it social support that they needed to realise personal goals.

Being patient was reported as another prerequisite for being successful in life as the following quotations indicate.

> You cannot just wake up and be successful in one day. You need advice and support from some people. You need to obey; you need to have discipline and patience. If you do not have patience, you cannot be successful (Kathrine, a 17-year-old female participant)

> I have to obey everybody, but most importantly, I have to improve myself for what I need to do. What do I need to do? I need just to work hard so that I can get a job. What I need to do is to be patient and to work hard so that I overcome these problems (John, a 21-year-old male participant)

Exhibiting discipline was regarded by the youths as critical to being successful in their lives. Such discipline involved being obedient, patient, hardworking and self-controlled. These are qualities, which were often lacking among them before they received rehabilitation services from UYDEL. Most importantly, they were aware of the importance of human agency as a key driver and manifestation of success.

The finding that the youths regarded their behavioural change and personal volition as the means for being successful in life is consistent with previous findings. For example, the hope theory by Snyder (2002) states that agency thinking is important in all goal-directed thoughts and actions. Agency thought is viewed as the perceived capacity to use one's pathways to reach personal goals. Within the framework of this theory, phrases such as "I can do it" or "nothing can stop me" describe people's positive mindsets and motivation to succeed. Agency-oriented thoughts become critically and

visibly important when people encounter barriers to realisation of their goals. Accordingly, agency thinking helps people to motivate themselves to find the best ways to achieve their goals (Synder, 2002). It is implied that the youths who were receiving rehabilitation services from UYDEL exhibited high levels of self-agency that manifested in experiences of hope and aspiration. It is exciting that they viewed themselves as personally responsible for their successes and had clear roadmaps towards achieving their set goals. Apparently, the youths applied self-management strategies such as goal setting to ensure they succeeded in their jobs in particular and lives in general. Re-building self-esteem through agency thinking and exhibiting positive conduct were important steps towards being successful in future. Such psychological traits were essential in enabling them to have optimal control over their lives. They also enabled the youths to experience a sense of independence upon receipt of rehabilitation; to be accepted by their communities, to rebuild relationships and to reclaim their lives in their local communities (Kirst et al., 2014).

Belief in supernatural interventions

Belief in supernatural intervention was another way in which the youths who were receiving rehabilitation services from UYDEL experienced hope and aspiration. Both Christians and Muslims reported that they believed in God's influence for a better future. The following accounts illustrate this dominant belief in supernatural interventions among them.

> I will achieve my goals by praying to God, having faith and being a hard-working person. After getting a job, I will earn money to take care of my mum; and I promise to take good care of her. (Stanley, a 14-year-old male participant)

> The training I am getting from the centre and the religion I believe in make me feel hopeful. I know I can achieve my goals by trusting in God, having faith, and by being strong. I believe I can do that. I also show respect to elders and those people who know most in my field of work. (Sabrina, a 15-year-old female participant)

The accounts by Sabrina and Stanley show that practising religion, for example through praying to God, enhanced positive beliefs and values, which include being socially and personally responsible and respectful. Besides human agency, the youths viewed supernatural intervention as capable of enabling them to meet their goals such as earning income and taking care of their family members. Praying appeared to create inner peace and power, and belief that they could prevail over life challenges. Optimism, hope, and religion have previously been identified as traits which promote resilience among people (Loewenthal, 2006). Religion is indeed one of the most powerful systems that exists worldwide. Symbolic actions that are enacted in religious practices such as prayer create a set of rules for social interactions and decision-making. Religious systems thus predict that they should make positive decisions and engage in meaningful social interactions. Therefore, belief in

supernatural interventions constitutes the core of resilience. Moreover, belief in su-
pernatural intervention facilitates effective coping with life stressors and promotes
mental well-being; it is also positively related to pro-social behaviour and values.
In addition, people who believed in God were more hopeful and forgiving than
non-believers (Loewenthal, 2006).

Social determinants of hope and aspiration

Participants attributed experiences of hope and aspiration among the youths to
core aspects of the rehabilitation services they received from UYDEL. The domi-
nant belief among them that they would acquire appropriate employment upon
graduation, coupled with the timely emotional support and guidance, fostered the
sense of hopefulness and aspiration among them. The following accounts illustrate
a belief that was dominant among them:

> Being trained here makes me hopeful about my future. I am studying mechanics. I get to
> know how to operate the engine of motorbikes so that when I go out in the field I can start
> looking for a job and I can develop myself. (Ryan, a 14-year-old male participant)

> The course I am taking here makes me hopeful about my future. It is a catering course.
> When I look at it, it opens doors to what I want. In addition, the people I am with make
> me hopeful. They show me that there is something very good for me. If I behave in a
> cool way, I will be successful and realise my dreams (Jane a 17-year-old female
> participant)

Ryan, a 14-year-old male participant, further stated:

> Getting the training here is an opportunity for me. After this, I want to look for a job of
> being a mechanic so that I can be in that job and do it very well. There is a man in my
> town that has a workshop and he is earning good money. I have an opportunity of be-
> ing a mechanic and benefiting from it. If I behave well with the people I am with, there
> is an opportunity for me to get a job and to get the things I want.

As these quotations indicate, Ryan and Jane highly valued the vocational training
they received from UYDEL. Vocational training offered opportunities that would
give the youths structured routines, income and purpose in life. It is thus clear that
they were keenly interested and determined to acquire the skills being offered
based on associated benefits that could be realised in the future.

Social support for the youth

Participants reported that the youths attributed their experiences of hope and aspi-
ration to the provision of social support by UYDEL. The provision of social support

in particular demonstrated care and concern for them. The following quotations illustrate this view:

> Our director inspires me. He comes and encourages us; he speaks with us about our plans and how we have to behave in the future. Furthermore, our nurse is inspiring me by her character. She is always teaching us and talking to girls about how to behave positively (Laura, a 17-year-old female participant)

> Madam Kathy (a social worker) is very helpful to us. When we came here, we did not have anything including clothes; actually, nothing. She gave us necessities such as clothes, soap and everything that we now have. She also took good care of us by giving us shelter and food (Martin, a 14-year-old male participant)

These accounts show that Laura and Martin appreciated the emotional and material support they received from the staff of UYDEL. The youths reported feeling valued and loved because of meeting their basic needs such as food and shelter. Because they had generally lacked parental love and care previously, the availability of alternative sources was timely. In keeping with the view that UYDEL provided viable social support to the formerly neglected youths, one participant stated:

> When they (youths) come here, we notice that they do not know what they want. They believe that life is all about sleeping and waking up. We show them that life is about more than sleeping and waking up. We inform them that they might have something today, which they may lose later if they are not careful. Therefore, we help them to plan for their future. That is why we provide them with therapy, training, and motivational interviewing, shelter, etc. We also guide them to make positive decisions for their lives while they are here (Dean, a 28-year-old social worker)

The provision of different services including training and therapy apparently prepared them to view life positively and be confident that they could be successful in their future endeavours. Motivational interviewing, in particular, encouraged them to be the initiators of their desired changes and take informed decisions concerning aspects of life such as future employment. The finding that UYDEL provided social support to promote hope and aspiration is in consonance with findings of previous researchers. For example, Schimel (2008) reported that people who suffered from significant trauma were often in need of unconditional positive regard to gain self-respect, self-confidence and trust in society. Such unconditional positive regard subsequently facilitated their reintegration within their societies after being empowered to become contributing members. The provision of social support to the youths in the context of this study appeared to fill the void caused by previous experiences of neglect, abuse and suffering which they experienced. In addition, Barton and Macklin (2012) reported that people were likely to engage in the process of change when they were involved as active partners in setting goals and choosing strategies for intervention. This view is consistent with the concept of positive youth development that suggests the need to promote competence,

positive connection and a supportive and empowering environment for social work clients.

The provision of informational and other forms of social support were appropriate ways of developing competences for the youth recipients of rehabilitation services to be hopeful that they could later realise personal goals and ambitions. Rehabilitation in general provided them with the skills and knowledge for effective re-entry in their families and communities. In general, social support contributed greatly to their improved physical, social and mental well-being and enabled them to consider reintegrating with their families and becoming active contributors to the socio-economic development of their respective communities.

Conclusion

It is common that people who experience significant social adversity such as child trafficking, sexual abuse and exploitation often succumb to a life of misery and chronic destabilisation. Such a sad reality is also common in contexts of low- and middle-income countries such as Uganda where rehabilitation services are either non-existent or less developed. Yet, our results show that youth recipients of rehabilitation services from UYDEL, a non-governmental organisation in Uganda, were steadily recovering from adverse life situations they had previously encountered. This recovery manifested in their experiences of hope and aspiration, which included ownership of valued possessions, exhibition of positive conduct and the belief in supernatural interventions. Such positive outcomes were triggered by factors such as the availability perceived by the youths of employment opportunity following acquisition of vocational skills and the experience of social support. Our findings suggest important implications for social work practice in the Ugandan context where children and youths comprise the majority of the population. In particular, our findings suggest that human beings are generally capable of overcoming social adversity often with minimal intervention as long as people's capacities, interests, ambitions and hope are effectively mobilised and re-activated. Social work practitioners should adopt the strengths perspective rather than the problem-focussed approaches when intervening in situations of adversity that are highly prevalent in low-income countries such as Uganda.

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Part III | Children and Welfare Policy Contexts

Chapter 11
A comparative study of the adoption policies in British Columbia, Canada and Norway

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Abstract Effective programming for child care and protection is based on relevant policies and legislation of the respective countries. This study focused on social work policies on adoption in British Columbia, Canada and in Norway. The aim of this study was to compare the social policy intentions, or the official 'wish lists' of the political elites focusing on their policy documents, namely the British Columbia Adoption Act and the Adopsjonsloven (Norway's Adoption Law). The texts on adoption were explored using document analysis within the grounded theory framework. The analysis revealed nine distinct categories: (i) best interests of the child; (ii) continuity of care; (iii) maintenance of pre-adoptive relationships; (iv) family membership; (v) child's perspective; (vi) identity preservation and aboriginal rights; (vii) birth parents' rights; (viii) adoptive parents' rights vs. requirements; and (ix) authority of the court and ministry. This study shows important aspects of policy-making aims with regard to BC's Adoption Act and Norway's Adopsjonsloven. Social workers in both settings are expected to act upon social policy guidelines; this study teased out the relevant specifics. Future studies should delve deeper into cross-national learning in the field of adoption protocols in different settings.

Keywords: social work, adoption policy, British Columbia, Canada, Norway, Adoption Act, Adopsjonsloven

Introduction

Every child has a right to be loved and kept safe. Providing this safety and care is the responsibility of the child's parents in Norway and Canada. However, some questions remain unanswered. What happens when parents fail to meet adequate standards of care for their children? Who ensures that the needs of these children are met if it is decided that their parents will not be able to fulfil this role on a permanent basis?

Since 1986, Norwegian social workers, or *sosionomer*, have relied on their national policy, the Adopsjonsloven (the Adoption Law), to answer these difficult questions. Social workers in the Canadian province of British Columbia [BC] have

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relied on their own provincial policy, known as the Adoption Act, since 1996, to shape the way in which they practise their profession. These policies are the foundation of this chapter. The chapter focuses on provincial adoptions, in the case of British Columbia, and national adoptions in Norway and not international adoptions. It also focuses on children who are living outside of their birth family as mandated by the respective ministries.

In 2010, 21 children previously living in foster care throughout Norway were adopted. In 2011, this number increased to 25 and 27 in 2012. In 2013, the most recent statistic provided by the national report, NOU, 2014: 9 Ny Adopsjonslov, 25 children were adopted (Søvig et. al., 2014).

Overall, these statistics both surprised and intrigued me. Three years ago, I was employed as a social worker in the Permanency Planning Programme, a non-profit agency. This programme is designed to support children in British Columbia who are transitioning from foster care to adoption. In 2013/14, there was approximately the same number of children adopted off my own personal caseload at my workplace as there were in the whole of Norway. During the 2010/11 fiscal year, there were 266 children adopted in BC who were previously in the care of the Ministry of Child and Family Development; 232 children in 2011/12; and 205 children in 2012/13 (Turpel-Lafond et. al., 2014). With an increased focus on permanency planning, this number increased to 273 children adopted from foster care in BC in 2015 (MCFD, 2015). If I work from the statistics offered in Ny Adopsjonslov, almost 10 times as many children are being adopted from foster care in BC than in Norway. Why might this be so?

The difference in adoption numbers does not appear to be attributed to population nor to the number of children in care because both are strikingly similar (Statistisk sentralbyrå, 2016; BC Stats, 2015; MCFD, 2015). What is perhaps as interesting as the numbers is the collective attitudes expressed by those working in the field of adoptions in Norway and BC. While BC emphasises that there is not enough focus placed on adoption planning (Turpel-Lafond et. al., 2014; Cadieux, 2015), a Norwegian committee formed to review the national adoption policy questions whether their relatively low numbers are still too many (Søvig et. al., 2014).

Rationale for study

In this study, I explored the attitudes and intentions of policymakers in British Columbia and Norway. The difference in adoption practices of Norway and BC may be attributed to a number of factors, including socio-economic conditions, culture and history, but I wondered if the policies, which were written in their respective contexts, had strong differences as well. I interrogated whether the dissimilarities that existed in the prescribed adoption practices had evolved from significant distinctions in these national and provincial adoption policies. In order to study in the future, the impact of adoption policies, it was necessary to understand first what was actually written in them.

My study sought to make clear the official criteria that social workers were expected to follow in their practice. Policy is an integral element in social work (Figueira-McDonough, 1993; Cummins et. al., 2011), and it has the ability to change practice on a large scale. Having a more informed understanding of the Adopsjonsloven and the Adoption Act will hopefully open inroads for future studies in policy implementation and comparative studies.

Literature review

In this section, the literature is reviewed based on subthemes. These are: (i) the welfare states and models of child protection and (ii) how a child is viewed and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The welfare states and models of child protection

Esping-Andersen (1990) defines the concept of the welfare state and offers specific characteristics that differentiate between the *ideal types* of liberal, conservative and social democratic regimes. By definition, Canada, and its many provinces, including British Columbia, fall under the category of a liberal welfare state (Arts and Gelissen, 2010; Esping-Andersen, 2007; Cox, 2013; Khoo et al., 2002). With low levels of decommodification, often high societal stratification and supports that are offered on a means-tested basis, BC's state plays a relatively minimal role when ensuring that the needs of the people are met (Esping-Andersen, 2007; Arts and Gelissen, 2010; Berrick and Skivenes, 2013).

In comparison, while no country is a pure representation of the models, Norway comes particularly close to depicting a true social democratic state (Esping-Andersen, 2007; Arts and Gelissen, 2010; Kojan and Lonne, 2012; Pösö et al., 2014). In the Nordic model, the state plays a significant role in meeting a very wide range of needs through a system of high decommodification, low social stratification, and a relatively generous minimal threshold for offering support (Esping-Andersen, 2007; Kojan and Lonne, 2012; Berrick and Skivenes, 2013).

Both child protection systems have been highly influenced by their respective welfare states and by what their governments have chosen to support. Norway's child protection system is often referred to as a *child welfare* or a *family services* model. It focuses on therapeutic support for the family as a whole; BC's system maintains the name *child protection* because their main concern is risk to, and protection of the child (Waldegrave, 2006; Trocmé et al., 2013; Khoo et al., 2002; Kojan and Lonne, 2012; Samsonsen and Willumsen, 2015).

In keeping with the social democratic philosophy, Norway's family services offer a wide range of universal assistance focusing on prevention and voluntary in-home support, designed to promote the strengths of the family unit (Waldegrave, 2006; Samsonsen and Willumsen, 2015; Berrick and Skivenes, 2013). Social workers work in partnership with families maintaining the mentality that parents are responsible for meeting the needs of their children and the role of the state is to support this

relationship (Kojan and Lonne, 2012; Pösö et al., 2014). The focus on individual protection, and particularly on coerced protection, is often seen as unnecessary and harmful to relationships involved (Kojan and Lonne, 2012; Picot, 2016).

In contrast, BC does not have a child protection system without this intense and overlying focus on individual *child protection*. This model is based on an adversarial legal approach where investigations ensue, social workers are often in conflict with families, and it is ultimately unacceptable for a child to be lacking protection (Waldegrave, 2006; Khoo et al., 2002; Stokes and Schmidt, 2012). This system utilises standardised risk assessment tools, making it possible for social workers across the province to share similar ideas of both what a child in need of protection looks like and the best, most effective intervention strategies (Khoo et al., 2002; Stokes and Schmidt, 2012). Ultimately, the safety of an individual child takes precedent in a *child protection* model over the maintenance of family relationships.

In practice, social work is not as clear-cut. Many social workers in Norway focus heavily on protecting the child and many BC social workers spend considerable time building relationships with families, believing in the value of biological bonds and rapport between service users and professionals. In reality though, the systems as a whole tend to allocate different resources to protecting the individual child instead of supporting the family unit.

How a child is viewed and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989

Throughout history, the concept of a child has been constructed and reconstructed many times, re-entering popular discourse in child protection in recent years. A British sociologist, Nick Lee, described the alternative views of children as *child being* on the one hand and *child becoming* on the other. *Child being* is an individual in their own right with capacity, agency and the ability to make sound decisions for him/herself; *child becoming* is a vulnerable individual in the process of eventually developing into an adult with rights and responsibilities but until then requires support and protection (Lee, 2001).

While Canada and British Columbia in particular have entered into this debate, their position on how to view a child remains somewhat puzzling. According to Canada's ratification of the UNCRC, the nation upholds the belief that "children are cast as full human beings, invested with agency, integrity, and decision-making capabilities" (Stasiulis, 2002: 508). However, there is no explicit reference to children in the Canadian constitution, and in BC they are granted few participatory rights (Lundy et al., 2012; Stasiulis, 2002). In keeping with the nation's liberal history, all citizens, including children, are seen as individuals capable of providing for themselves. At the same time many adults in BC argue that this view minimises their role as parents and destroys the 'beautiful' concept of the innocence of childhood (Tang, 2003; Stasiulis, 2002).

The province also appears to be uncertain when defining a child in law, allotting the title of "adult" at 19 years old while attributing varying degrees of adult

responsibilities (i.e. driving, consent to sexual activity, and criminal charges) at younger ages. In 2002, Stasiulis wrote that Canadians were committed to rejecting the view of seeing children only as *potential*, but a year later, Tang (2003: 281) suggested that the nation has "failed to fully conform to the precept of treating children as individuals capable of making their own decisions". Thirteen years later, Canada and British Columbia still appear to be unclear in the way they define a child.

Turning to Norway, there is a clearer definition and societal view of a child. According to Pösö et al. (2014: 485), in Norway, there is an "increased focus on children as independent subjects … with their own interests and rights". Using Lee's (2001) terminology, children here are generally viewed as *beings* in the present rather than *becomings* in the future. Courts are more willing to view the child as the main person in a case and the society has a greater readiness to see the child as a member on their own, skilled and capable of participation (Skjørten, 2013; Jans, 2004; Ellingsen et al., 2012; Pösö et al., 2014). Norway's law is relatively clear: a child is a person in their own right, with capacity, agency, and abilities of self-determination (Skjørten, 2013; Jans, 2004; Ellingsen et al., 2012; Skivenes, 2010).

Much of this debate on how to view a child has been spurred by the creation, ratification and implementation of the UNCRC in the 1990s, which both Canada and Norway ratified in 1991. The Convention covers a large spectrum of rights and responsibilities given to children, including political, economic, social and cultural rights (UN General Assembly, 1989; Tang, 2003). It provides a framework for how to view children in personal and professional settings and ways to meet their universal needs. Two articles in particular from the UNCRC have been strongly focused on in research and contributed greatly to this study. They include Article 3, which focuses on the best interests of the child, and Article 12, which speaks on child participation (UN General Assembly, 1989).

In brief, the literature suggests that both Canada and Norway claim to have adopted Article 3, the best interests of the child, into their practice (Fernando, 2014; Tang, 2003; Stasiulis, 2002, Vis and Fossum, 2015; Skjørten, 2013), while the Committee on the Rights of the Child implies there is still work to be done (UNCRC, 2010). Similarly, both countries have seen triumphs and struggles in implementing Article 12, children's participation, in their policies (Satsiulis, 2002; Fernando, 2014; UNCRC, 2012; Jans, 2004; Ellingsen et al., 2011; Kojan and Lonne, 2012; Ellingsen et al., 2012; Ulvik, 2015; Skivenes, 2010; Vis and Fossum, 2015).

Theoretical framework

This study employed grounded theory, developed in the 1960s by American sociologists Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss. I had never read either policy before and I did not have a hypothesis prior to my analysis. I was open to allowing the text itself to tell its own story and guide me towards theory development (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; LaRossa, 2005; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007; Bryman, 2012; Floersch et al., 2010; Kjellberg, 2015).

Therefore, I have worked in the field of adoptions in BC and I know the importance of the principle of permanency. The central belief behind the principle of permanency is that there are negative consequences when erratic instability is present in a child's life (Bush and Goldman, 1982; Waddell et al., 2004). A child benefits psychologically when they have stability in both their environment and in relationships with primary caregivers (Barth, 1999; Waddell et al., 2004). Spending a semester studying in Norway, I also learned about the biological principle and Norway's deeply rooted traditions in prioritising biological ties (Raundalen et al., 2012; Ellingsen et al., 2011; Slette et al.,1993; Skivenes, 2010). Similarly, I knew of the prevalence that attachment theory has in adoption practices (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Bowlby, 1988; Johnson and Fein, 1991). While I was unsure whether any of these principles would be present in the policies, knowing their importance in practice, I felt it was my responsibility to study them prior to my analysis. I did not read either policy through an attachment theory lens; rather, I used grounded theory to let the data guide me.

Methodology

I used the qualitative method of document analysis in this study. The essence of document analysis is working to gain a broader knowledge of the meanings behind a text (Altheide et al., 2008; Bowen, 2009; Bryman, 2012; Yanow, 2000; Atkinson and Coffey, 2011; Cho and Lee, 2014). It is about the constant interplay between reading and interpreting, ultimately to discern themes and patterns within the text (Altheide et al., 2008; Bowen, 2009; Owen, 2014; Cho and Lee, 2014). The purpose is to understand the perspectives of the authors and to produce empirical knowledge (Yanow, 2000; Vaismoradi et al., 2013; Bryman, 2012; Prior, 2003; Bowen, 2009). Atheide et al. (2008) and Owen (2014) compare document analysis to ethnographic research; instead of engaging with people in a community, the researcher immerses him/herself in the text at hand. Document analysis is an inductive method in which I created categories from the data at hand to explore potential emerging patterns, themes, frequency of words, trends and the relationships between the groupings (Prior, 2003; Bryman, 2012; Vaismoradi et al., 2013; Bowen, 2009; Cho and Lee, 2014). Using grounded theory, the categories are also analysed as a way to draw out relevant theories.

I chose policy analysis because I believe knowing what is in a policy is vital to practice and that social workers should be involved in the creation, assessment and implementation of policies. I am quite satisfied with this method because it was efficient, posed minimal risk in the emotionally-intense field of social work, opened inroads for future studies and ultimately enabled me to gain a deep understanding and knowledge of the policies. I found this process, from a research perspective, at times both challenging and exciting. One of the principle challenges I found with document analysis was determining succinct categories from the data. I discovered that a single provision in the policy could fall under multiple categories. I was pushed to use assessment skills to determine the 'best fit'. Another challenge of my

research was addressing what I came to call the 'So what?' factor. Many times, I would read a provision included in either policy and ask myself, "So what? The Adoption Act says ..., but what does this *mean*?" Attempting to find meaning in minute pieces of text and connecting that to meaning in the document as a whole was the most difficult but overall most satisfying aspect of my research.

There were also ethical considerations, mostly around my experience as a solo researcher, as this method is often utilised by teams of people. There were also concerns around my personal biases because I was raised, educated, trained and employed in the British Columbian context. These were things I tried to remain aware of.

Findings and discussion

I begin with a brief description of each government policy. BC's Adoption Act comprises 43 pages and approximately 13,275 words. It is broken down into nine parts, with 101 sections. The policy begins with a glossary, providing definitions and interpretations of words used throughout the document. This glossary gives the first insight into BC policymakers' possible intentions. With stated definitions provided by the policymakers themselves, no words or terms in the policy should be misunderstood or thought to mean something other than what the policymakers believe them to mean. This is the beginning of a highly regulated policy.

 In comparison, Norway's Adopsjonsloven is considerably shorter in length. When printed, it is 14 pages and approximately 1,935 words. The document has five chapters with a total of 25 sections. It does not provide a glossary for terms used.

While there is a significant difference in the overall size of the documents, which has an effect on the amount of data provided by each, there is sufficient content to explore. Throughout my analysis, I engaged in a rigorous process of categorising content within the document. The categorisation system that I developed, through a grounded approach, is my theory as to what the text says. Furthermore, I used existing theory, as appropriate, to help me analyse my findings and allow a more in-depth understanding of the data collected. The following are eight categories found in both texts and one category, identity preservation, found only in the Adoption Act.

Best interests of the child

A close analysis of both policies reveals that they were written *for* the child. This is evidenced by the number of times the word 'child' or 'barn' actually appears in the policies, 344 and 54, respectively. Both policies also give "paramount consideration" to the child's best interests, in keeping with Article 3 of the UNCRC; however, the Adoption Act gives specific examples as to how to do so whereas the Adopsjonsloven does not.

Noteworthy is that BC's Adoption Act has many provisions allowing the court and ministry to do things for the child in the name of 'best interests'. I was

reminded of the philosopher. Indeed, the concept of paternalism, where one does something for someone else under the auspice that it is for their own good explains these interests (Lansdown, 1995; Dworkin, 2002). This thinking then led me to Max Weber's concept of legitimate authority. Using this theory, while the court may potentially be acting in a paternalistic nature towards the children in the policy, that same court and ministry is allotted legitimate authority by the people to act in this way (Weber, 1978; Szelenyi, 2016; Guzmán, 2015). Regarding Norway, the compact Adopsjonsloven does not include, to such a high degree, the potentially controlling nature of the court specifically regarding the child's *best interest*.

Both policies leave quite a lot of leeway in terms of defining what best interests mean, this leeway being larger in Norway than in BC. The texts allow the social worker to fall back on their own contexts, to determine how to consider the child's best interests. Relating this to adoption, the common opinion or context in BC is that permanency through adoption is the best option. The courts agree with this. As the above analysis of the policy shows, the court and ministry often make that final determination regarding the supposed best plan for a child. If the voices of the powerful people in the Canadian province propose adoption, how would this influence adoption? Conversely, Norway's Adopsjonsloven does not give any indication as to whether or not the act of adoption is in the best interests of the child. The policymakers leave this determination solely up to the social worker. If the professional is socialised in the Norwegian context, where adoption is not prioritised, I question whether adoption will immediately be looked at as the best alternative.

Continuity of care

In my analysis, I found it interesting that BC's Adoption Act uses the term "new ties" when describing adoption practices. The word 'new' implies that the child and adoptive parents do not previously know each other, namely they are not other relatives, not foster parents, etc. This did not seem to fit with continuity of care. Yet, the Adoption Act has other provisions, which suggest permanency, stability and continuity. For example, it suggests that the child must reside with the adoptive applicant for six months prior to the adoption. This relates quite strongly to attachment theory and hopefully gives the child the opportunity to create a secure base with their adoptive family (Bowlby, 1988; Ainsworth et al., 1978). There is an additional provision, which states that the court may dispense with this residency requirement. In contrast, Norway's Adopsjonsloven states that an individual applying for adoption either must wish to foster or has already fostered the child; there is no statement allowing the court or ministry to dispense with this.

Another point of interest and distinction is the value placed on foster parents. The Adopsjonsloven appears to value foster parents as lifelong caregivers, acknowledging that they can provide this continuity of care for the child. The Adoption Act, in keeping with BC's view that foster parents are temporary, does not mention fostering as a permanent option for children. In BC, adoption is about continuity of care; in Norway, it is provided through foster care. I wonder if this

understanding could have important implications for adoption numbers in each context.

Maintenance of pre-adoptive relationships

I understand this to mean the maintenance of relationships which the child has with either their biological family or any individuals prior to their adoption. Both policies are clear that all parental rights and responsibilities are severed upon adoption. In addition, both state that though openness agreements can be made to maintain pre-adoptive relationships, it is intended to keep with both the biological principle and attachment theory.

The ability to maintain relationships conforms with the stages of development and self-identity (Horowitz, 2012; Erikson, 1959). Depending on the age of their adoption, a child's development and self-identity may be affected in many different ways. Allowing for openness might suggest that a child has the opportunity to understand their identity prior to adoption and to know where they came from, which could support future development.

Interestingly, when discussing pre-adoptive relationships, I found an absence of explicit mention of the biological principle in Norway's Adopsjonsloven. After the significantly heavy emphasis on this principle in the literature, there was no specific mention of it. One wonders how much context might influence the reading of a policy. I question whether Norwegian professionals find the biological principle in these policies because they share some lived experiences and settings with the policymakers and in a way they expect to see it. I am also curious whether the policymakers intended specific provisions to uphold the biological principle yet I interpreted these differently. What does this mean for practice if professionals make the claim that a principle is embedded in a policy when, in fact, it is not quite as clear to other readers?

Family membership

This category is not highly emphasised in either policy, but it is more so in BC's Adoption Act. Upon adoption, Norway's Adopsjonsloven states that the child gains the same *legal* status as a biological child. I feel this somewhat limits the relational value of adoption. In comparison, BC's Adoption Act uses statements such as the adoptive parent becomes the child's parent and the child becomes the adoptive parent's child. The Adoption Act also discusses the importance of positive relationships among the family and having a secure place as a member of the family.

These all seem to address the affectionate relationship between a child and parent that is valued highly in British Columbia. However, there is an emphasis on a child having a family, any family, who provides care, love and security. This does not imply that Norway does not value this relationship, it is simply not emphasised in the policy.

Child's perspective

In their respective policies, Norway appears to uphold their view of a child as a *being*, similar to their practice, while BC somewhat tends to view children more as *becomings*. Therefore, both policies overtly support Article 12 of the UNCRC, respecting and promoting the child's perspective throughout the adoption process. Both are adamant that the child's views must be heard and define the age at which a child's perspective must be addressed. There are numerous provisions throughout both policies stating ways in which a child's consent must be obtained and respected. This is specifically with regard to consent to the actual adoption, to name changes, and to openness contracts.

The consent to a name change was particularly interesting. Upon a closer reading, the courts and ministry in BC had the authority to override many of the provisions regarding the child's perspective, including this name change. This again reminded me of Dworkin's concept of paternalism. The Adoption Act seems inclined to prioritise the child's perspective insofar as they remain in line with the views of the court and ministry. When they differ, it seems the court reverts to seeing the child as a *becoming*, needing support to make the right decisions.

The findings on child's perspective also resonate with child rights academic Roger Hart's Ladder of Participation (Hart, 2008). In this model, Hart discusses eight steps of participation, beginning with the very much non-participation steps of manipulation, decoration and tokenism and ending with children initiating decisions on their own and sharing these with adults. While neither policy promotes entirely child-initiated decisions, BC's Adoption Act seems to reach steps 5 and 6 where children are consulted, informed and somewhat involved in decisions. However, the policy still holds to the idea that children may not know what is best for them. Therefore, those who are deemed to have this capacity must intervene on the child's behalf, including in adoption-related conversations.

Norway's Adopsjonsloven in some provisions appears to reach step 7, where decisions such as consent to an adoption can be initiated by the child. Related to this, the Adopsjonsloven has a distinct provision mandating that adoptive parents tell the child that they are adopted. I think this speaks to how Norway views children as capable of handling information and experiences.

Identity preservation and aboriginal rights

This category is evident in BC's Adoption Act but not in Norway's Adopsjonsloven. A number of provisions in BC recognise the need to protect a child's cultural heritage and to preserve their identity; this is not the same for Norway. One particular statement in the Adoption Act discusses compiling information about the child's birth family for the child to have.

Additionally, BC's Adoption Act focuses specifically on Aboriginal rights. The aboriginal adoption system has practices which are somewhat different from the mainstream ministry offices in BC, utilising a model they call the Medicine Wheel (Richardson and Wade, 2010). Using this model, they attempt to understand

individuals and situations from a holistic point of view. Overall, it is gratifying to see this important focus within the BC policy. Canada has an abhorrent history with the indigenous population and I see incredible value in including the protection of culture into policies. With an influx of refugees and the possible changing demographics of immigrants in both societies, it would be interesting to follow both policies to see how they are amended over time regarding cultural aspects in adoption.

Birth parents' rights

Throughout my analysis, I found birth parents in both policies are allotted similar, albeit very limited rights. Upon adoption, birth parents lose all parent rights in both contexts, but contact orders can be requested in both BC and Norway's policies. Norway's policy appears to offer a slightly greater voice to birth parents prior to the adoption, allowing them to share their opinion. This would be in keeping with the biological principle, and I wonder if it has any impact on the smaller numbers. Essentially, I found that the policymakers in both settings recognised the loss of parental rights post-adoption while still protecting the individual rights of the birth parents.

Adoptive parents rights vs. requirements

While birth parents are addressed similarly in the policies, adoptive parents are discussed in rather distinctive tones. When adoptive parents are mentioned in the Adopsjonsloven, it is typically with regard to the requirements they must meet prior to adoption. The attitude in Norway directed towards adoptive parents was one pressured towards quality of care.

In contrast, in the Adoption Act, adoptive parents are given more rights and recognition. While they must also meet standards, the policy has a number of provisions stating what adoptive parents are entitled to, including significant information about the child and ways the adults are protected and supported. Additionally, the BC Adoption Act states that adoptive parents may be entitled to financial assistance through the *Post Adoption Assistance Program* (MCFD, 2015) and parental benefits through the government (Government of Canada, 2016). While adoption should not be about financial gain, I think it is important to note that the policy addresses this; it seems another way in which BC policymakers recognise adoptive parents. It would be interesting to explore why this difference in attitude seems to exist and if the recognition and support offered to adoptive parents in the BC policy could influence higher numbers of adoption.

Authority of the court and ministry

This category is based on Max Weber's term, 'authority'. Both policies offer substantial authority to the government and child welfare systems. While this authority seemed to be a little more intense in BC's policy, this may just be because the

document is longer. Both appear to allot final decision-making to people other than the child and potential adoptive parents.

I attempted to use Weber's theory to shed light on this. Both Norway and BC are democratic societies, meaning the people vote in both governments. These governments then go on to employ individuals in the respective ministries, who also are individuals involved in the voting process. Those involved in the adoption process, the adoptive parents and the social workers, give the government the authority to take or refuse action because ultimately the majority of the people believe the government is working for them. They support the overall direction of the government; otherwise they would vote them out, thus, allowing the court and ministry authority in matters, such as the adoption policy. Seeing it through Weber's theoretical lens, I could understand my findings more clearly and the distress I originally felt over how much authority the government had diminished a little. However, I am left with many questions about how the authority of each governing body may ultimately impact adoption numbers.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I conducted a comparative study of adoption policies in two settings: British Columbia, Canada and Norway. I used grounded theory to generate categories in an attempt to capture the intentions of the policymakers within the relevant documents. The analysis of BC's Adoption Act and Norway's Adopsjonsloven reveals interesting findings. Both policies appear to be highly centred on the future of the child. As a social worker, all I can ask at times is that the system is designed at its core to meet the needs and promote the rights of those most vulnerable. However, this looks in individual practice; I hope that the policy at the very least promotes best practice. This appears to be the case in British Columbia and Norway. Both policies have been created with substantial attention and both continue to be amended over time. I observed that the individuals in need of support are indeed at the heart of both policies.

In addition, I observed many links between the policies and social work practice. This gives me hope in the possibility of future studies regarding the impact of social work policy. Some areas of future studies in relation to adoption policies may include obtaining and respecting the views of children under 7 years old; the concept of recognition in the social work field; the importance of preserving cultural identity; a comparison of British Columbia's Aboriginal child protection services and Norway's child protection system; the impact of context on a government policy; and the influence of government authority on social work practice.

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Chapter 12
The dilemma of "getting to Denmark" and "reinventing the wheel"
The case of the bolivian and norwegian child welfare systems

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Abstract The global development of welfare states is a process rather than an event.[2] Even though countries experience similar forces and critical events, their institutions ultimately respond in unique ways. Social work practice is defined not only by the welfare model that characterise the national context, but also by the political and institutional culture. Even though countries can learn from each other's experiences, whether new welfare states are to follow a pattern of development marked by Western yardsticks or not is still a controversial point in the academic field. Based on understanding of the relevance of the uniqueness of each society and its right to self-determination, an institutional approach to policy learning opens the possibility of social and political development through a process of institutional design and change. The aim of this study was to explore the possibility of policy learning between Norway and Bolivia. Using a qualitative comparative case study design, interviews with experts and social workers were conducted to explore social work practices in early child welfare services in both countries. The findings show that even though Norway was an exceptional prototype of a welfare state, the fundamentally unique institutional conditions in Bolivia could not be overcome by the mere use of policy learning and policy transfer. Under such circumstances, policy transfer would be not only inadequate but also undesirable. Bolivia can benefit from bottom-up processes in its attempt to answer the country's need for political development.

Introduction

The welfare state as a concept refers to a state that assumes the care, protection and promotion of the social and economic well-being of its citizens as its major task.

Globally, the development of welfare states is a process rather than a sudden oc-currence. States have assumed different degrees of responsibilities at different times, influenced by cultural and historical circumstances. The agenda of forcing poor countries to transform following yardsticks developed in the global West is an unrealistic task, just as it is unrealistic to think that the global South can and must develop in a vacuum. Policy learning, a strategy in which best policies are identified by comparing several already implemented practices is an alternative road to enhancing a process of contribution between and within countries. In the proceeding sections of this chapter, I present two complementary approaches to understanding the emergence and consolidation of European welfare states. I also present the dilemma concerning enhancing development in the global South with the assistance of the experiences of the developed world while reducing the risks of deterministic learning. I introduce the institutional perspective as an alternative to conducting research aimed at examining and promoting processes of contributions among countries. Lastly, I present the case of Norway and Bolivia as examples where an institutional approach is used to examine social work practices within the field of child welfare.

The origins of the welfare state

From a historical perspective, the origin of the welfare state can be placed in early nineteenth-century Europe. The difference between a welfare state and the mere application of poor relief policies was aimed at reconsolidating democracy and ca-pitalism. Post-war European conditions contributed to the golden age of economic growth, lasting up to the 1970s. It was fuelled by a combination of a growing em-ployment rate and the legitimation of the nation state (Begg et al., 2015). The gro-wing economy demanded a larger labour force. The need for full employment compelled the intervention of the state to ensure reduction of insecurity. Poverty, unemployment, inadequate healthcare and housing were tackled through sustai-ned interventions, allowing more economic growth and further social investment. Even though it is possible to talk about a common history in the making of a Euro-pean welfare model, the capacity, coverage and functioning of welfare states were different among countries. Religion and polity are two complementary angles to an understanding of the formation of the welfare state in the European context.

Religion as an organiser reveals the beginning of the moral responsibility of care. The Catholic, Lutheran, and Reform Protestant societies had approached the responsibility of caring for the poor throughout history differently (Kahl, 2005). During the Middle Ages, work and poverty were assumed as two sides of the same coin. Glorified by the image of Christ, work was considered a painful effort that only the poor and powerless assumed. Prayers from the poor were valued as the most effective way to ensure entry into heaven, establishing a reciprocal commit-ment between the poor and the potent marked by the transaction of prayers for do-nations. The late 19th century introduced a religious reform in Europe leading to the distinction between Catholics, Lutherans, and Protestants. According to Kahl

(2005), the northern protestant countries developed schemes initiated by the local and central governments, whereas their southern catholic counterparts reinforced the traditional poor relief laws by creating catholic institutions and clerical orders dedicated to the poor and sick. By the 20th century, Catholic countries had developed a social assistance model that was fragmented, ungenerous and sectorised. The uncontested role of the church as provider determined a late emergence of welfare states. In these countries, the state assumed responsibilities slowly leading to a categorical system. Similarly, societies with a Reformed Protestant heritage viewed the state's involvement in social welfare as incompatible with its social doctrine of self-help and local mutual help. The welfare state in these countries also developed late and was fragmented. Calvinist principles assert poverty as predestined, attributing responsibility to the individuals. However, societies with a Lutheran heritage managed to introduce a unitary and generous social protection model as early as the 19th century. Countries such as Germany, Sweden and Norway, where state responsibility was not contested by the church, quickly introduced social insurance principles, expanding coverage and inclusion criteria, growing into a comprehensive social protection system.

Even though religion set some grounds for understanding the origins of the European welfare state, a complete picture would not be possible without connecting the patterns of working-class formation and political coalition during the transition from a rural economy to a middle-class society. This transition would not have been possible without the emancipation of the individuals from the property status during the agricultural society. For example, in Britain, the poor relief system established in the 18th century together with the agricultural revolution led to the sedition of the fetishisation of land ownership and the valorisation of the labour force as a commodity, arming the workers with a new capacity for negotiation (Szreter, 2004). The employee-employer relationship transited from being one-sided to being co-dependent between the parties. The industrial revolution altered this dynamic leading to a new era of dependency. As the Poor Law of laissez-faire promoted wage employment and cash nexus, individuals became unable to afford a livelihood without the market.

The industrialisation process in Europe was a key event that reshaped the role of the state regarding the welfare of citizens (Esping-Andersen, 1989). The industrial revolution also implied curtailing privileges of property owners and the emergence of a proletarian mass. The growing population in industrial cities and an unprecedented enlargement of the working class increased demands to improve housing, working and health conditions. The associations resulting from the industrialisation of Europe gave the opportunity to form social capital and the possibility of direct participation in political life (Fukuyama, 2001). Citizenship and its associated benefits were only possible through the cohesion of the growing labour force. However, Esping-Andersen's (1989) argument is that the Conservative and the Marxist countries answered the needs and demands arising from the industrial economy differently. While conservative countries assumed market regulation as the best practice to promote capitalism without class struggle, the Marxist countries envisioned equality as the main goal and assumed major political rights as the means to achieve it.

Countries sketched a diversity of welfare state models depending on their unique struggles to regulate the market (employers), the working-class, the formation of coalitions, and the political inclination of the new middle class. According to Esping-Andersen (1989), Scandinavian countries had a politically articulate farming class that enjoyed a greater capacity to negotiate, leading to the incorporation of services to the taste of the middle class, with universal reach, promoting equality of status and cross-class solidarity. Marxists countries that later turned into social democracies first introduced democracy and social policies as a strategy to reduce social mobilisations. Nonetheless, this same strategy that ultimately altered the traditional social hierarchy and resulted in class representation pierced the frontier between capitalism and socialism. The Lutheran tradition of the north also contributed to this transition. Martin Luther's translation of the Bible changed the concept of work, investing it with an intrinsic positive value and giving a negative connotation to unemployment and laziness (Kahl, 2005). Since salvation was no longer linked to the nature of work, one could argue that the resultant tax-based benefits had a better chance of being accepted by both the rich and the poor, thus enhancing cross-class solidarity.

Esping-Andersen (1989) describes a continental Europe with a middle class historically loyal to the preservation of occupational segregation, leading to the emergence of a welfare state characterised by subsidiarity, private insurance schemes and segregating privileges. According to Kahl (2005), in the European Catholic south, policymakers, Church officials and population in general opposed the secularisation of poor relief policies trying to sustain the cycle of exchange of contributions for prayer and the co-dependence between the classes. By not secularising poor relief institutions, authorities in Catholic countries lacked the power to enforce further legislation change. Put differently, the faith in the benign nature of the labour market led Liberal countries to a means-tested social insurance model, forcing the worse-off to seek aid from the pre-capitalist institutions of welfare, namely the family, church and community (Esping-Andersen, 1989). Calvin's interpretation of work meant that unemployment and laziness were irreversible sins for both the rich and the poor (Kahl, 2005), changing the traditional connotation given to poverty as a punishment. Thus, the state rendered the welfare of the poor the individual's responsibility.

"Getting to Denmark" or "reinventing the wheel"?

Welfare states are undeniably living organisms that evolve and adjust to contextual circumstances. Even though countries sometimes experience similar forces and critical events, their institutions ultimately respond in unique ways. The design of modern political institutions is often assumed as a universalistic path of evolution. This vision is marked by the idealised example of Denmark. Denmark is a country with a "mythical image" characterised by stability, democracy and peace; it is also prosperous, inclusive, and low in corruption (Fukuyama, 2011, p. 14). From this standpoint, the challenge of creating modern political institutions can be resolved

by finding a formula on *how to get to Denmark*. It is undeniable that by international standards, certain welfare models are better than others at accomplishing higher levels of social development. Whether new welfare states are to follow a pattern of development marked by Western yardsticks or not is still a controversial point in academia. In fact, some researchers argue that policies are so institutionally and historically embedded that it is virtually impossible to replicate the very same conditions (Greener, 2002). Still, evidence shows that the global South has often been expected to develop following the steps of their developed counterparts, leading to a process called "dependent learning" (Gough & Therborn, 2010, p. 710). In Latin America, countries have navigated diverse historical paths. The uneven pace of industrialisation (Huber and Bogliaccini, 2010) and the varied ethno-cultural heritage (Riesco, 2009) led to a diversity of social security schemes. Thus, in the region, development as a monostatic concept is not admissible (Draibe and Riesco, 2009).

The agenda of forcing poor and chaotic countries to transform following exclusive targets is an unrealistic task. However, it is also unrealistic to think that the global South can and must develop in a vacuum. Policy learning is an alternative road to enhancing a process of contribution using the experience of failure and success gathered within and between contexts (Rose, 2005; Gough and Therborn, 2010). Policy learning can take four different processes: direct copying, emulation, combination and inspiration (Dolowitz and Marsh, 2000). As the continuum approaches the inspiration pole, a larger degree of freedom is given to the recipient context resolving the issue of dependency.

According to Begg et al. (2015), the European welfare systems were developed during a period of benign demographic and economic conditions, allowing the momentary reconciliation between the competing dynamics of capitalism, equity and democracy. The political ideology ultimately defined the characteristics of the state intervention regarding the trilemma. As shown in the previous point, welfare state formation responds to the contribution of unique contextual conditions. What is problematic about policy learning is the possibility of identifying optimum policies or practices (Kerber and Eckardt, 2007). It is doubtful whether a policy can universally be considered benign. In addition, even if so, the necessary conditions of the recipient context would remain unresolved (Kerber, 2006).

An institutional perspective: a framework for policy learning?

The issue of policy innovations and policy learning in which best policies are identified by comparing a number of already implemented practices is an emerging method (Noaksson and Jacobsson, 2003; Arrowsmith, Sisson and Marginson, 2004; Kerber & Eckardt, 2007). The key to best practice might be to allow flexibility in the design of specific actions, programmes and policies on the part of the recipient country. In fact, certain objects of transfer are as general as ideas, providing room for adjustment and further development. Whereas the "hard" elements of transfer (policy instruments, institutions and programmes) might demand the replication of particular conditions (see Dolowitz, 2003; Jones and Newburn, 2006), the "soft"
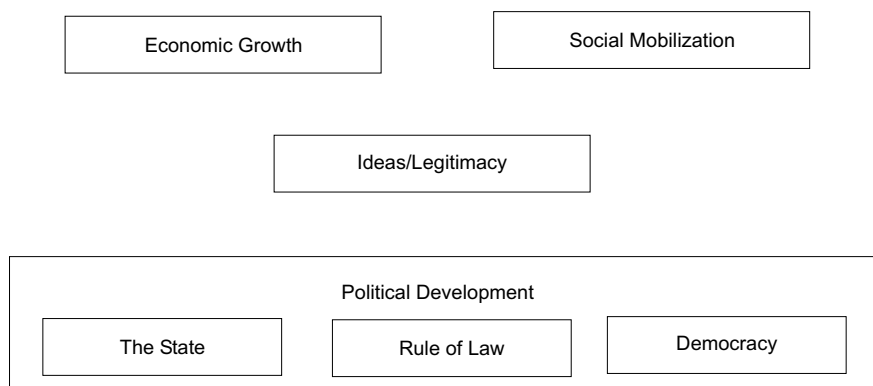
Figure 12.1 Dimension of development

Source: Fukuyama, 2014; p. 43.

elements (ideas, ideologies and concepts (Stone, 2004) might serve as building blocks, allowing a sufficient degree of freedom.

Based on the understanding of the relevance of the uniqueness of each society and its right to self-determination, an institutional approach to policy learning takes institutions as the central concept of analysis, assuming that institutions not only reflect social norms, but that their nature can explain changes in the other sphere (Rothstein, 1998). Therefore, economic and social arrangements are no longer perceived as dependent only on factors such as culture, but differences can be traced back to the design of political institutions. An institutional approach opens the possibility of social and political development through a process of institutional design and change.

Fukuyama (2011; 2014) proposes a theory based on a worldwide historical overview of welfare state formation taking political development as a key element. In his theory, political development can be attributed to the emergence and balanced coexistence of three institutions: the state, the rule of law, and the accountable government (democracy). His theory emphasises state building as the most important element for political development. Stability rests on the capacity of a system to frame the nature of institutions and individuals around the virtue of justice (Rawl, 1971; Rothstein, 1998). Fukuyama's historical analysis proves that state building is a necessary first step. When the state's capacity is too weak to ensure adequate functioning of the rule of law and democracy, the tendency is to return to traditional forms of power, which lead to a state of political decay. For example, countries such as the United States of America, Greece and Italy developed a clientelistic public sector and experienced a greater challenge to achieve high-quality governance due to the arrival of democracy before the construction of a modern administration (Fukuyama, 2014). Similarly, some countries in Latin America are good examples of how democracy functioned against the construction of a national identity. State building is better achieved through the construction of a national identity. After achieving independence, countries such as Bolivia

were left with a conflictive national narrative, decrementing the possibility of social conciliation and cooperation leading to a clientelistic sectorised public sector (Fukuyama, 2011). The state's capacity to govern rests on its investiture with legitimate power (Fukuyama, 2004). Citizens' well-being and social justice are premised on fair social and political institutions that provide the possibility for individuals to commit to a common good (Rawl 1971; Kymlicka, 2002). If well-functioning institutions create legitimacy circles, the programmes or policies created by such institutions will also likely enjoy the confidence of the citizens, thus having a greater chance of success (Rothstein, 1998).

What can we learn from the Norwegian and Bolivian case?

Having reflected on the challenges that emerging welfare states face if they are to develop using the experiences of other countries, I will now introduce an exemplar case based on a study that was conducted to compare Norway and Bolivia's child welfare systems[3] using an institutional scope.

Worldwide, 200 million children under the age of 5 years fail to reach their cognitive and socioemotional potential due to poverty, poor health, nutrition and deficient care (Grantham-McGregor, et al., 2007). These conditions not only decrease the chances of the affected children achieving good standards of living in the future but they also condemn the future of their families and their nations to a vicious circle of disadvantage. Because early cognitive development is a good predictor of being successful in school, disadvantaged children are likely to register poor results concerning cognition and education, associated with lower earnings in the future. Countries whose population is largely affected by this problem can expect negative impacts on national development. Research in the field of neurosciences attributes the potentialities of brain development to the early biological and psychosocial experiences (Walker et al., 2011). According to research, experiences extending from the time of conception to the end of early childhood affect the

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3   The study from which the following points are developed aimed to explore the possibility of policy learning between two different contexts, Norway and Bolivia, based on the principle that, on the one hand, as social democracies, both countries aimed at similar targets in terms of social development; on the other hand, both contexts also enjoyed different institutional conditions. Using a qualitative comparative case-study design, a total of seven in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted, three experts for the case of Norway and five (two experts and three social workers) for the case of Bolivia. The interviews explored the nature of both models in relation to the field of early child welfare, considering the child protection services and health services available for the children and their care-givers from time of conception to the age of six. Multiple case scenarios guided the interviews providing a sample of the working conditions of the child welfare system in both contexts (the capacity and scope of the states and the institutional implementation conditions). Supplementary documents, academic articles and reviews were used to corroborate and clarify information provided by the experts. For more information regarding the study refer to the original source: Nogales Crespo, K. A. (2015). Policy transfer: a tool for political development: a comparative study of child welfare services between Norway and Bolivia (Master's thesis, University of Stavanger, Norway).

timing and pattern of genetic expression, altering the function and structure of the brain and behaviour, responding to a cumulative effect logic. Research from the field of early cognitive development and neurosciences provides evidence that the loss in the potential of affected children is preventable. The challenge is not the lack of knowledge but the lack of professional and political commitment to act on the required scale (Jolly, 2007). Policymakers need to focus on the early intervention of: maternal nutrition, infant and child nutrition, environmental toxins, psychosocial factors (early learning and caregiver-child interaction, maternal depression, exposure to violence, and institutionalisation) and disabilities (Walker, et al., 2011).

The Scandinavian welfare model is an exceptional prototype with high levels of effectiveness. This welfare model often serves as an example when it comes to work-family reconciliation and an equal share of household and waged work between parents (Lindén, 2007; Blum, 2014). In fact, the Scandinavian welfare model, or "Nordic nirvana" as described by Lister (2009), is a welfare state model that is best at achieving economic competitiveness and social justice through the promotion of values such as equality, solidarity and universalism (Kangas & Palme, 2005). According to Mkandawire (2005), the Scandinavian welfare model represents a useful lesson for contemporary debates on democratisation, development strategies and inequality and must be perceived as a model of development rather than an "end state".

In Latin America, Africa and Asia, a major characteristic of welfare provisions is the element of informality (Wood, 2004), implying that social security and health care schemes depend on informal employment (Barrientos, 2004). Although important progress has been made towards the consolidation of a welfare state in Bolivia, mostly after the launch of a new constitution (The United Nations Office at Geneva, 2015), social problems are still not yet well managed. In fact, UNICEF's (2007) report on child poverty disparity showed that in Bolivia, 69% of the population aged 0-17 were income poor (an alarming 90.5% in rural areas), 39.7% of children were experiencing housing deprivation, 29.2% were deprived of adequate sanitation, 14.4% did not have access to safe water, 10.6% were deprived of education and 8.1% did not have access to health services.

Organisational arrangements and bureaucracy: In terms of administration, both countries are organised around three levels: the national, the regional and the community level. Whereas in the case of Norway this division ensures the functionality and reliability of decision-making and administrative processes, in the case of Bolivia, roles and coordination channels work differently. The national level prescribes programmes and policies to be implemented at the municipal levels with scarce technical support and little or no coordination to local endeavour, leading to an uncoordinated parallel system. In Bolivia, the parallel layers and confusing administrative organisation lead to high levels of bureaucracy, delaying everyday decision-making and compromising the efficiency of the overall system.

Organisational features in both contexts are also different. In Norway, decision-making includes the participation of experts (the technicians) and politicians

(society's representatives) at all administrative levels, bringing democratic representation, stability, continuity and expertise to the table. In Bolivia, decision makers respond to a mixture of politically appointed authorities and professionals, and politicians. Consequently, the political agenda of the government in office interferes with policies and programmes, bringing instability and discontinuity in the services.

> Each time there is a change of a director, there are also changes in the technicians. […] One of the factors of the poor quality of these services is also the lack of permanence of staff, beside the low budget and the lack of departmental policies. Each director, especially in the SEDEGES (Office of Social Monitoring), is going to initiate new policies. The only thing that continues is the basic attention services such as shelters and care of cases of violence and abuse. (Expert in child protection, Bolivia)

The constant change in authorities, professionals, programmes and policies determine a variation in quality between different communities and political periods. Both countries also respond to a local autonomy and decentralised system. In Norway, this arrangement ensures accessibility through the presence of specialised services in local units, together with more generic interventions. Experts point to institutional coordination and flexibility in national programmes as the two key elements for success. In Bolivia, the reality is very different. The lack of clarity regarding responsibilities constrains the possibility of accountable autonomies.

> What happens is that health has been municipalized, so at the autonomous regional level, such as the departmental government and municipalities, they do not understood that it is their responsibility and they end up bureaucratising the services […] Sometimes they are short in the provision of medicines and supplies (Servant Health, Bolivia)

Moreover, municipalities are left alone to deal with highly dispersed communities, a lack of channels to connect families and services and insufficient personnel and resources. Without appropriate technical support, local authorities might fail to develop the programmes and policies to respond to local needs.

Control mechanisms: As stipulated in national legislations, both countries recognise mechanisms of control for both providers and citizens. In Norway, the Control Province is the agency responsible for ensuring the quality of services and administration. From a constructive scope, their intervention aims to support the development of local institutions. Public servants (such as the public health nurse and school personnel) as well as local institutions (such as the Mother-Child Offices) function as agents of surveillance and mediation, connecting citizens to services. In terms of the child welfare system, the rights of the child are the overriding principle of accountable professional practice. In Bolivia, even though the Children's Act stipulates the responsibility of professionals working with children to report any issues of concern, the lack of mechanisms to control and hold professionals accountable limits the practice of this right.

> The control mechanisms are very precarious, […] are done mainly in administrative
> and financial matters but not in relation to job performance. The changing staff is also
> a problem […] the staff working as consultants according to law 181 are not account-
> able for their work. Only institutionalised personnel can be held accountable (Servant
> 2, protection, Bolivia)

Moreover, even if reported, the overload of cases together with a slow bureaucratic procedure might result in a painful and damaging process. In fact, cash transfer benefits are the principal strategy used in Bolivia to ensure the access of children to their rights. The lack of a demographic monitoring system and the precarious conditions of the Child Protection Units and Local Health Services limit their capacity to control the well-being of the child.

Corruption and trust: In Norway, decisions are made based on the cooperation between political authorities, skilled experts and regular citizens, not only mobilising more resources but also reinforcing transparency and trust. In Bolivia, the complex administrative organisation and the attribution that authorities have to appoint their team lowers transparency and trust.

> What is practised is the arbitrary designation of positions […] in consequence, we
> could say that most people working in these services are not skilled professionals;
> they do not meet the minimum criteria which is an infringement of the rights of the
> child (Protection expert, Bolivia)

Thus, in Bolivia there is a regression in the forms of power, which is noticeable through corruption during the electoral process, nepotism in allocation of authorities and staff, corruption in control mechanisms, tokenistic allocation of resources, and mistrust as well as sectorialisation.

> The technical staff, […] is called institutionalised staff; it is staff that can hardly be
> changed. They cannot move them because of the syndicate. This strong syndicate has
> pushed out authorities (Health expert, Bolivia)

Economic Resources: In Bolivia, the budget allocated for social development is scarce. Moreover, since the allocation is subject to a highly bureaucratised process and political disposition, budgets are allocated with little regard for the real needs and sustainability of interventions.

> There is a lack of staff; lack of resources […] services are not effective, the police is of-
> ten short of gas for their vehicles and paper to print reports. Municipalities like the re-
> gional government allocate their budgets to infrastructure and not to social ends
> (Protection servant 2, Bolivia)

Services and values: According to the experts interviewed in Norway, the following values inform the child welfare policies: keeping women in the labour market,

prioritisation of children, prevention before attention, keeping families together, individual autonomy, and equality/integration. In Bolivia, the practice in child welfare services reflects and reproduces four different values: regional not individual-based redistribution (redistribution takes place by the allocation of more resources to the most deprived neighbourhoods and areas), protection overrules family bonds, attention over prevention, and childhood as a passive uniform experience.

Opportunities for policy learning between the two countries

Even though similar organisational structures were identified in both countries, differences were also evident in the design and implementation of policies. Conflicts between administrative layers, scarce coordination, bureaucracy, clientelism and minimal services and lack of professionalism were common to the Bolivian context.

Health care services for children aimed at monitoring development of children under six were public and universal in both countries. In Norway, access to services was mediated by welfare state agents such as public health nurses, indicating a strong capacity of the state to provide care. In Bolivia, the lack of active agents and an overall weak capacity of the services to make themselves visible for at-risk populations limited the possibilities for users to gain access. Public services were minimal and consequently used only as a last resort, reinforcing the stratification of society; a competing value to that of the Scandinavian socio-democratic model.

With regard to child protection services, Norway has shown great capacity to provide an effective and often early intervention. By keeping services close to the community through the active watch of the public, they have managed to serve the population in a proactive manner. In Bolivia, strong limitations were associated with poor budgets and overall poor organisational arrangement, which led to nepotism and instability and discontinuity of policies, programmes and services in the local protection units. In fact, services fell far from the instituted expectations set by the national Children's Act, National Code and UNCRC.

Autonomy is a critical component in both systems; it is a tool of democracy. Local autonomy essentially involves the transfer of functions, powers and responsibilities from the central authorities to the territorial-administrative units, building an effective democratic public administration (Tudor, 2009; Biriescu & Butuza, 2011). Autonomy and de-centralisation are based on the assumption that local authorities are best placed to meet the needs of communities (representation) and that they have the necessary capacity to undertake this role. Norway is an example of a good practice in these terms. Not only does the inclusion of local governments in national decision-making process ensure flexible and context-sensitive national mandates, but also capable local authorities and technicians are successful in developing bottom-up processes. However, in Bolivia, autonomy led to a disorientation of the functions and responsibilities at the different administrative levels, increasing bureaucracy and ineffective allocation of resources. In fact, in countries

where democracy arrives early, before the state is strong enough to regulate the power of the state and the rule of law, a regression into old forms of power can be expected (Fukuyama, 2012). In Bolivia, the tendency of professional associations and syndicates to act on a partial protectionist matter, working against the general principles of justice are a sign of a sectorialisation. The requirement for stability rests on the capacity of the state to frame institutions encouraging the virtue of justice (Rawls, 1971; Rothstein, 1998). State building means strengthening a common goal. Sectorialisation can lead to the confrontation of social groups diminishing the chance for accountability.

Similarly, legitimate and trustworthy control institutions would tool a strong rule of law. Norway not only has legal disposition but also a trustworthy mechanism to hold professionals accountable. In Bolivia, control mechanisms work in such a precarious manner that nepotism, irregular hiring, corruption and unsupervised professional practice are part of everyday social work practice. The low capacity of the state to enforce the legal disposition in terms of hiring, budgeting and undertaking surveillance in the childcare and child-protection systems is scarce. Building the rule of law is challenging, going beyond the mere design of legal dispositions (Fukuyama, 2011). When the rule of law is unable to limit the power of the state, the law might function in a paradoxical way, entitling more authority to the state even against the purpose of ensuring and protecting the well-being of the citizens.

Conclusion

The distance between Norway and Bolivia is not only geographical but also political, social and cultural. Even though Norway is a good example, Bolivia's reality evidences a gap which is too difficult to overcome by the mere use of policy learning and policy transfer. The institutional differences between the two contexts describe two different realities. In Bolivia, the effects of coordination problems, clientelism and political rivalry lead to everyday challenges reflecting a fundamentally different institutional system and political culture from that of Norway. What influences social work practice is not limited to welfare arrangements, but rather what matters most are the workings of the overall organisational structure and the political culture (Tuastad & Nogales, 2017). Transferring policies under such circumstances will be a risk rather than a benefit. In this context, policy learning and policy transfer is not only inadequate but also undesirable. Bolivia's urgency is to develop means for political development. The Norwegian experience provides Bolivia with benefits accruing from bottom-up processes aiming to correct the incongruences and shortcoming of the basic political institutions.

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Chapter 13

Implementation of article 22 of the united nations convention on the rights of the child in nakivale refugee settlement, Uganda

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Abstract A number of international and local legal instruments for the protection of refugees have been ratified by many countries, including Uganda. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is a crucial legal instrument that specifically addresses concerns of all children. Uganda is also one of the many countries that have ratified this legal instrument. The other relevant instruments in the context of this study include the 1951 Refugee Convention, its 1976 Protocol and the 1969 Organization of African Unity-Convention, which address specific aspects of refugee situations on the African continent. While these legal instruments are capable of fundamentally improving situations of refugees if they are effectively implemented, evidence shows that the situations of refugees in Africa remain dire. This study's aim was to assess implementation of Article 22 of the CRC with emphasis on documenting children's perspectives in Nakivale refugee resettlement, Uganda. A qualitative approach to data collection, analysis and reporting was adopted. Data were collected through semi-structured individual interviews, key informant interviews, focus group discussions and review of relevant documents. Empirical data were collected in Nakivale refugee settlement. The findings indicate that there were significant gaps with regard to implementation of CRC Article 22 and other international instruments for refugee and child protection in Nakivale refugee settlement. For example, children's rights to health, education and protection were not guaranteed. Because of the gaps in implementation, refugee children were at high risk of abuse. In general, Nakivale refugee settlement did not appear to operate in accordance with international human rights standards. Significant improvements need to be made regarding implementation of Article 22 of the CRC to mitigate the precarious situation of refugee children in Nakivale refugee settlement.

Introduction

The aim of this study was to assess how Article 22 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) has been implemented in Nakivale refugee settlement,[2]Uganda. The government of Uganda ratified the CRC in 1990. In 1996,

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2   Nakivale is the largest refugee settlement in the South-Western Uganda. It was established in 1958 in the wake of an unprecedented influx of Tutsi refugees fleeing persecution from the Hutu regime in the neighbouring Rwanda.

Uganda complemented the CRC by enacting the Children Statute, now referred to as the Children Act (cap. 59). To further ensure strengthened protection of children, Uganda ratified the Optional Protocol to the CRC on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography on 19 August 2002. Additionally, the government of Uganda has adopted other instruments relevant to the protection of rights of children. These include the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, which came into force on 29 November 1999. Although these legal instruments are capable of fundamentally improving situations of refugees if they are effectively implemented, evidence shows that the situations of refugees in Africa remain dire. Therefore, this study's aim was to assess the implementation of Article 22 of the CRC with emphasis on documenting perspectives of children in Nakivale refugee resettlement.

During this study, the researcher aimed at answering the following questions:

1)   How has Article 22 of the CRC been implemented in Nakivale refugee settlement?
2)   How do children perceive their own lives as refugees in Nakivale refugee settlement?
3)   What are the refugee children's experiences with regard to promotion of their rights in respect to health, education, participation and protection?
4)   To what extent do the objectives of Article 22 of the CRC match children's well-being in Nakivale refugee settlement?

Theoretical framework

Three sets of theories were considered in conducting this study: (i) dualist-monist theories of international law, (ii) strengths perspective, (iii) African refugee theory.

Dualist-monist theories of international law

Monism and dualism theories explain the relationship between international law and national law. International law does not determine which point of view (e.g. monism or dualism) is to be preferred in particular states. Therefore, every state decides its preferred perspective for itself, according to its legal traditions. International law only requires that its rules are respected and states are free to decide on the manner in which they respect these rules and make them binding on citizens and agencies (Dixon, 2007).

The monist theory postulates that international law and national law are simply two components of a single body of knowledge called 'law' (Tapiwa, 2002). According to this theory, both sets of laws operate in the same sphere of influence and are concerned with the same subject matter; for this reason, there may be conflict between the two sets of law. If conflict between the two sets of law occurs, in a concrete case, international law prevails (Dixon, 2007). In contrast with the monist theory, the dualist theory emphasises differences between national and international law;

therefore, it suggests the need to translate international law into national law. Without this translation, international law does not exist as law. This theory further postulates that before international law is incorporated in national laws, judges cannot apply it to the citizens of the affected country. The choice of the monist-dualist theory was grounded on its predicted relevance in analysis, thereby obtaining an understanding of the implications for the implementation of international legislation on refugee children (specifically, CRC Article 22) in Ugandan law.

The strengths perspective

The strengths perspective as an approach to social work practice began in the early 1980s at the University of Kansas School of Social Welfare (Saleeby, 2008). In 1989, Weick, Rapp, Sullivan, and Kishardt coined the term strengths perspective to address a system in which practitioners recognise the authority and the strengths of people who are being helped. The strengths perspective is a radical departure from the traditional deficit-focused approach to social work practice. According to Saleebey (2006b: 16-20), the strengths perspective entails the following concepts: (i) every individual, group, family and community has strength; and (ii) trauma and abuse, illness and struggle may be injurious but they may also be sources of challenge and opportunity. Another concept assumes that you do not know the upper limits of the capacity to grow and change and take individual, group, and community aspirations seriously. The fourth concept states that we best serve clients by collaborating with them, while the fifth assumes that every environment is full of resources. The last concept deals with caring, caretaking and context. The strengths perspective enabled the researcher to assess refugee children not as individuals presenting with emotional problems but as full of strengths and capacities for recovery and resilient living.

African refugee theory

The African refugee theory (Kibreab, 1991) states that the current causes of the high influxes of refugees in Africa are still numerous. Kibreab (1991: 23) further stated:

> …at the heart of the African refugee problem lies a lack of respect for fundamental human rights, including the right of peoples to determine their own destiny…" Kibreab declares that: "…The refugee problem in Africa is a result of an inter-play of political, social, economic and environmental factors. It is not easy, therefore to isolate one factor to the neglect of others and to state the real cause with certainty. The factors that generate refugees are inextricably intertwined with each other…

Each refugee migration, no matter whether large or small, in the long or short term, originates from the socio-economic circumstances that do not occur elsewhere in the same form. The causes and the solutions of refugee migrations in Africa lie in the complex social and economic interactions manifested in everyday life. While inter-ethnic conflict might be the catalyst in one refugee migration, another might be the result of environmental stress caused by economic and demographic

pressures. The governments of many African states are increasingly and directly involved in situations that cause refugee migrations, through enforced villagisation or the direct persecution of a single ethnic group. The complex inter-play of socio-economic factors, which can lead to refugee migrations, does not af-fect each migrant in the same modality (Kibreab, 1991).

Methodological approach

A qualitative study was conducted among refugee children in Nakivale refugee settlement in western Uganda. The study sample included children who were born in the settlement and those who were born in their respective countries of birth. Refugee children aged between 13 and 17 years were enrolled in this study. To select a diverse sample, the researcher considered the following attributes: (i) sex — both male and female children were enrolled, (ii) age, (iii) nationality, (iv) location in the settlement, (v) duration of stay in the settlement and (vi) whether the children were accompanied or unaccompanied. Participants were selected from six different countries: (i) Burundi, (ii) Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), (iii) Eritrea, (iv) Ethiopia, (v) Rwanda and (vi) Somalia. Children of these nationalities predominantly live in Nakivale refugee settlement. Thirty-six children (17 girls and 19 boys) were enrolled in this study. Eleven of these children were from DRC, consistent with the fact that Congolese were the largest group of refugees (they constitute over 50% of the total refugee population in Nakivale). Purposive sampling and snowball sampling techniques were adopted to enrol participant children in this study. Research assistants who were familiar with the different refugee communities were asked to approach potential research partici-pants and to explain the study to them. Those who expressed willingness to par-ticipate in this study were interviewed. Children who were initially enrolled in the study and interviewed were asked to identify other children who met the se-lection criteria for the research assistants to meet and request their participation in this study.

Data were collected using the following methods: semi-structured individual interviews, key informant interviews, focus group discussions and review of rele-vant documents. Collection of empirical data was conducted in March 2015 and lasted two weeks. Four research assistants who both spoke the languages of the par-ticipants and English assisted the researcher in conducting the interviews. The for-mat for asking questions was very flexible, allowing the researcher an opportunity to probe issues that required further discussion. Eight (8) individual interviews were conducted with the refugee children (three girls and five boys). Additionally, four key informant interviews were conducted with the staff selected from Operating Partners and Implementing Partners in Nakivale refugee settlement. Four focus group discussions were also conducted with the children. Questions were asked in an open-ended format, allowing participants to express their views freely and in detail during the focus group discussions. All the discussions and interviews were audio-recorded after obtaining permission from the study participants. To

complement the empirical data, international and national legislations and documents on situation of refugees and refugee children in Uganda were reviewed.

Data were subsequently transcribed verbatim and post-coded into themes emerging from the data and guided by the study objectives and research questions. During data analysis, the researcher was faithful to the text of the interview. This is especially the case with a study like this one, which is conducted across linguistic and cultural boundaries. The first step in the analysis was to read the transcribed interview in its entirety to obtain an overall picture. Data from secondary sources such as documents related to international and national legislations were analysed qualitatively using a method known as "qualitative content analysis" (Bryman, 2012: 557). Selected texts exemplifying key themes incorporated in the text were identified to facilitate discussion of the findings.

The researcher ensured ethical conduct throughout the research process because of the fact that refugee children are a highly vulnerable study population. Moreover, the researcher took into consideration the fact that she was a foreigner in Nakivale refugee settlement and Uganda; patience was exercised to learn appropriate etiquette in her interaction with participants. The researcher received informed consent from each participant before personal interviews and focus group discussions were conducted. She also assured all participants that the collected information would be treated with strict confidentiality. Participation in this study was also voluntary.

Main findings and discussion

Findings are presented and discussed according to the main themes that emerged from the data, beginning with a description of the sample.

Socio-demographic characteristics of the refugee children

Fifteen of thirty-six refugee children came from single-parent families that were headed by mothers, except two Somali sisters, who were living with their father. Three refugee children did not have any adult family caregiver; these were from Somalia, Burundi and DRC. Two refugee children from Somalia were asylum seekers. Most of these children indicated that they did not have contacts in their respective countries of birth. Those who had contacts stated that they lacked the means to facilitate return to their countries of birth. The commonest reason for leaving their countries of birth was violence caused by wars.

Children who were asylum seekers, residing in Nakivale refugee settlement

Article 22 of the CRC declares that special protection shall be granted to a refugee child or to a child-seeking refuge. It is the state's obligation to co-operate with competent organisations, which provide such protection and assistance. Article 22 upholds the same principle in relation to both children with refugee status and

children seeking asylum, but in any case, provisions of the Convention cover all children within the jurisdiction of the country (Article 2). This means that even those children who are denied refugee status are still protected as long as they remain in the country (UNICEF, 2007). Children seeking asylum in Uganda faced serious challenges. The time they spent waiting for their refugee permits, without any guarantee about their future or any access to education, made them very vulnerable to abuse. In fact, the situation of children seeking asylum in Uganda was generally unclear. The professionals appeared to be unaware of the fact that children seeking asylum should enjoy the same rights as the other refugee children. During the interviews, they spoke as if there was a clear and legal distinction between refugee children and children seeking asylum. Professionals also did not seem to be aware of the real situations in which children seeking asylum lived. In general, they showed that no specific procedure was followed with regard to children who were seeking asylum in Uganda. It was taken for granted that children whose parents were denied asylum were not eligible for protection or to exercise their rights concerning health and education.

Unaccompanied and separated children

Three refugee children among the thirty-six participants came to Nakivale without parents or family members. They included a Somali girl, a Burundian girl and a Congolese boy who were aged 14, 15 and 13, respectively. In all the three cases, the unaccompanied minors revealed that they had not received the opportunity to live in a foster home or be assigned to any guardians. The Congolese boy stated that he had found a woman in Nakivale refugee settlement who took care of him and that he considered her as his aunt, but they did not live together. Among the refugee children, the most vulnerable were those who were unaccompanied by an adult recognised by law as responsible for their care. In the absence of dedicated efforts to monitor and protect their well-being, the basic needs of unaccompanied refugee children could not be met. Indeed, the presence of unaccompanied children and the need for special action on their behalf should be anticipated in every refugee situation. At the time of this study, there was no accurate record of the number of unaccompanied minors in Nakivale refugee settlement. According to a URCS aid worker, there were 750 in 2013 and about 1000 in 2005 unaccompanied minors in Nakivale refugee settlement. The majority of them were separated, implying that they fled their homes without family members and they found other refugees on the way.

Implementation of CRC article 22 in Nakivale refugee settlement

In the following section, implementation of the CRC Article 22 in Nakivale refuge settlement is considered in view of: (i) the right to health, (ii) the right to food, (iii) the right to education, (iv) the right to safety and protection, (v) the role of local authorities, and (vi) the future of refugee children.

The right to health

There were significant health concerns for refugee children in Nakivale refugee settlement. A health centre IV and four medical units run by Medical Teams International (MTI) served the whole settlement; these health facilities also served the nationals who resided near the settlement. Moreover, the participants regarded the quality of treatment as very poor. Refugee children reported that they were expected to live healthier lives in the settlement. Yet the only accessible water was dirty and likely to cause infections. Sanitation was generally poor because latrines were very dirty and unhygienic. The children frequently expressed their fear of getting sick; they were particularly very afraid of contracting malaria, because it was regarded as fatal. In fact, according to the health works at MTI, malaria was the leading cause of illness at the settlement. In 2014, the four health facilities treated 67,000 malaria cases. The incidence peaked in July, when 8,000 cases were treated. The peak malaria season starts in July after the rainy season (UNHCR Tracks, April 2015).

The right to food

The researcher found that there were widespread complaints concerning inadequate food rations supplied by the administration. Families who had stayed in the camp for less than 12 months received 12 kilograms of maize monthly, which was reduced to 6 kilograms, 3 kilograms and finally to nothing in the subsequent years of their stay. Most of the refugee children who were interviewed were receiving 3 kilograms of maize because they had stayed in the settlement for over 12 months. Along with kilograms of maize, refugee children received 1 kilogram of beans and a small bottle of cooking oil. Many times, the food distribution points were far away from where the refugee children and the rest of the residents in the settlement lived. Consequently, refugee children were required to walk a long distance and to carry their food, as the following quotations illustrate:

We eat once a day, maybe… [Somali Girl, 14 years old]

We eat once a day. You take either lunch or dinner. [Congolese Boy, 14 years old]

On some lucky days, we eat twice a day [Somali Girl, 13 years old]

There is not even food at school… [Somali Girl, 13 years old]

These accounts show that refugee children were concerned about the inadequate rations, which threatened their survival in the settlement. To be able to eat, children and their parents or siblings had to find some ways of earning money and buying more food within the settlement. At the end of one of the focus group discussions, a very delicate theme emerged, which was bribery for food. While participants were aware of it, they were afraid to discuss it openly for fear of retribution from administrators in the settlement. The participants reported that only refugees who were

able to pay a bribe to those serving the food received more food than those who could not pay. Moreover, participants reported that nationals also received food meant for the refugees.

The right to education

Of the thirty-six who were interviewed, eighteen participants were not enrolled in school. Many of the refugee children had dropped out of school due to such factors as poor quality of education provided, failure by their parents to pay tuition fees, lack of school materials and punishments by teachers. The high cost of education was the most reported factor which caused refugee children to drop out of school. Consequently, refugee children spent much of their time loitering around the settlement, doing petty jobs such as collecting plastic bottles and begging. Generally, refugees saw education as a means to a better future. Therefore, they were actively seeking ways of ensuring that their children had access to high-quality education, often outside of Nakivale refugee settlement. Again, this is a privilege which only a few refugees could afford.

According the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), schools for refugee children should follow the curriculum of countries of origin to facilitate better reintegration. Accordingly, UNHCR should obtain and supply textbooks from the countries of origin for refugees, or reprint or modify them to facilitate effective teaching and learning (UNHCR, 1994). In some schools, children used Kiswahili as a common language rather than English. Indeed, children said that only a few of their schoolmates could speak English. Those who spoke good English reported that they had learned it before they came to Uganda and when they were staying mainly in Kenya. The refugee children admitted that quite often, their Ugandan teachers, who were Ugandans, did not speak English and often taught in their local language, Runyankore. They also reported that teachers often administered severe punishment whenever refugee children did not complete homework, arrived late at school or did not answer the teacher's questions correctly. The other challenges that refugee children experienced include walking long distances to and from school, having only one meal per day and being abused by other refugees and other children. These findings show that refugee children faced too many challenges to succeed with education in the refugee settlement as the quotations below further illustrate.

> Nationals at school just abuse us; they say 'you are a refugee'. They discriminate against us. [Burundian girl, 15 years old]

> Most of the time, teachers speak in Runyankore and not in English when they are teaching. So, at the end, we get confused. If they were teaching in English, now I would be capable of speaking to you in English. [Congolese boy, 14 years old]

> When you come late, the teachers beat you. Moreover, when you don't have enough school materials, they beat you. Teachers can ask for books. She takes all the books.

The next day she comes back saying that she didn't find it; and she beats you. [Congolese Boy, 14 years old]

The right to safety and protection

Nakivale refugee settlement itself is set up in zones, which are named after the ethnicity of the refugees who live there. Thus, children will say "I live in New Congo" or "I live in the Somali zone". Unfortunately, rivalry and tensions were common among the different eleven nationalities present in the settlement. Communication among the different nationalities occurred only among certain ethnic groups due to similarities in languages and culture. For instance, it was possible to see integration among Congolese and Burundians, or between Ethiopians and Eritreans. A pattern of continued violence among refugees and refugee children was evident. Cases of rape and murder in the resettlement occurred where refugees were expected to be highly secure and under the protection of both UNHCR and the government of Uganda. Being female in Nakivale refugee resettlement meant facing additional challenges, no matter the country of one's origin. Accordingly, refugee girls were often more vulnerable to sexual abuse including rape than refugee boys.

The role of local authorities in the implementation of CRC article 22

The refugee children from all nationalities mentioned that when they had problems, they tried to solve them within the community by informing local leaders. They trusted the office of local council chairperson who was regarded as a mediator in conflict situations. This office was also more valued by refugee children than the Ugandan police was. The latter were often described as very corrupt, and therefore not reliable in judging any kinds of crime. Participants also reported that the attitude of the police authorities showed that refugees have fewer rights than nationals.

Refugee children's future in Nakivale refugee settlement

The future of refugee children in Nakivale was a very delicate topic to discuss during the interviews. In this context, many children, irrespective of their ethnicity, had faith in divine intervention. They hoped that God would not abandon them and would give them the opportunity of a new and better life than the one they had in Nakivale refugee settlement. Some participants did not have many aspirations for their future; they stated that they were hopeless and lost. Many of them did not even want to mention the word future. However, the biggest dream the participants generally shared was to see their families united and in good health.

It was astonishing that all the participants wished to be resettled in a third country. They stated that because Nakivale refugee settlement could not guarantee access to quality education, their plight would be highly improved if they were

resettled, especially in the United States of America, Canada and Europe. Many of the participants appeared to have attempted the process of resettling to a third country without success. Among the children who were interviewed, very few reported that they were currently pursuing the process for resettlement in a third country. It should be also noted that there was rivalry and tension among different ethnic groups stemming from perceptions that particular groups were often favoured for resettlement in a third country. In general, most of the participants did not wish to be resettled to their countries of origin because of the traumatic circumstances they experienced before coming to Uganda.

Conclusion

The findings in this study show that there were significant gaps in the implementation of Article 22 of the CRC and of other international and international legal instruments for child protection in Nakivale refugee settlement. Consequently, refugee children were not guaranteed the most basic rights, such as the right to health and education. While children are expected to enjoy various categories of rights including those of survival, protection, development and participation, in extreme circumstances, survival rights must be prioritised. The precarious situation described above implies that refugee children did not even realise survival rights in the context of Nakivale refugee settlement. Surprisingly, none of the national or international organisations that worked in Nakivale resettlement had effectively accomplished their duty of child protection for the refugee children. In summary, the findings suggest that Nakivale refugee settlement in particular and Uganda in general did not operate in accordance with international human rights standards such as those prescribed by Article 22 of UNCR regarding protection of refugees and particularly refugee children. A better understanding of international and national legal instruments such as the CRC and a greater commitment to refugees and refugee children are prerequisites for ensuring their protection and survival. Professionals should be provided with dedicated training programmes to address specific needs of refugee children. Peace building programmes should also be designed and implemented to prevent the escalating tensions and conflicts between and within ethnic groups as well as the violence against children in Nakivale refugee settlement, Uganda.

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Chapter 14
Child participation in practice
The impact of expert meetings and groups on the ombudsman process in Norway

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Abstract The need to listen to children and involve them in decision-making has increased since the coming into force of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1989. Using qualitative methods, this chapter examines the impact of child participation on ombudsmen's work in Norway and limitations to their effectiveness. Despite a predominant consultative approach to participation, findings suggest that expert meetings and groups can enhance the ombudsman's effectiveness and relevance as a voice for children's rights in society. The study however, observes a gap in mechanisms to ensure follow-up on the implementation of recommendations to strengthen children's rights. Moreover, real fulfilment of Article 12 of the CRC is not in the expert meetings and groups, but in children's participation in diverse environments within which children routinely interact with adults.

Keywords: child participation, children's ombudsman, expert groups, expert meetings.

Introduction

The call to promote children's rights is gaining centre stage, owing to the challenges that undermine children's well-being in various parts of the world. Indeed, scores of children worldwide continue to live in situations that are detrimental to their survival and development. For instance, the state of the world's children report (UNICEF, 2016) shows that going by the observed levels of inequality, by the year 2030, 167 million children will live in extreme poverty, 69 million children below the age of five will die and 60 million eligible children will not attend primary school. Further evidence indicates that compared to adults, children are at greater risk of abuse, violence, exploitation, harmful labour, trafficking and various other problems associated with combat, HIV and AIDS as well as poverty (UNHCR, 2012; Wessells, 2009). Premised on its three cardinal principles, namely provision, protection and participation, the adoption of the CRC was intended to provide a benchmark for the promotion of children's rights in various contexts.

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Within the CRC, the right to participation is specifically addressed in Article 12 while complementary aspects of this right such as freedom of expression, access to information, freedom of thought and conscience and freedom of association are addressed in the subsequent articles 13, 14 and 16. Article 12 states that:

> State parties shall ensure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child (United Nations, 1989).

Article 12 not only makes participation a right, but also recognises children's competencies as individuals. Under the rights-based approach, the CRC establishes obligations on all stakeholders working with children to "respect, to protect, and to fulfil" children's participation rights (UNFPA, 2010: 47). This is grounded in evidence that participation provides benefits for children, organisations and societies at large (Lansdown, 2011).

Ombudsmen institutions and child participation

The primary goal of ombudsman institutions wherever they exist is "to be a voice for children and nothing else" (Flekkøy, 2002: 411). This includes performing advocacy, monitoring and oversight functions among others. In addition, the ombudsman also aims to facilitate children's participation by expanding opportunities through which they can express their voices in matters affecting them (Miljeteig, 2006: 27). This role is clearly elaborated in General Comment No. 2 (United Nations, 2002); and in many countries where the institution exists, there is a legal requirement for the ombudsman to promote child participation. A study commissioned by the European Network of Ombudspersons for Children (hereafter referred to as ENOC) reported that existing statutes in Denmark, Lithuania, Austria, Cyprus, England and Wales among other countries require the ombudsman to consult and involve children in its activities. In Scotland, the law clearly states that "the children's commissioner must encourage the participation of children and young people in the work of the commissioner" (Hodgkin & Newell, 2008: 7).

Expert meetings and groups at the Children's Ombudsman in Norway

The world's first ombudsman institution for children (Barneombudet) was established in 1981 in Norway (Miljeteig, 2005). Its overriding mandate is to "promote the interests of children vis-à-vis public and private authorities and to follow up on the development of conditions under which children grow up" ("Act and Instructions for the Ombudsman"). This includes: ensuring that authorities comply with legislation on children's rights; proposing measures that can strengthen children's safety under the law; and advancing proposals for measures that can solve or prevent conflicts between children and society. It also incorporates the duty to ensure that children are heard and their views considered when authorities make

decisions. Thus, to fulfil this responsibility, the ombudsman organises expert meetings and groups to enable children and young people to express their views on issues affecting them.

The distinction between expert meetings and groups manifests in both their constitution and duration. In an expert group, the ombudsman interacts with young people between the ages of 13 and 17 over a period to discuss issues such as divorce, violence or incarceration of a family member. The thrust is put on the participants to advise the ombudsman on how to better help children and young people who are in similar situations (The Ombudsman for Children in Norway, 2013). Although expert meetings serve the same purpose, they are usually short, one-off consultative engagements with children in their own environments such as schools, youth clubs or other social spaces. Ultimately, both expert meetings and groups enable the ombudsman to gain insights into the experiences of children and to advocate effectively for their interests while executing its representative function. Despite their well-intentioned purpose, it is important to recognise that the scientific knowledge regarding expert meetings' and groups' contribution to the ombudsman's work is not well established.

Study aim and research questions

Based on the above, the aim of this study was to explore the core spirit within which expert meetings and groups are organised, their value addition to the institution's work and challenges to their efficacy. Considering this objective, three main questions were asked:

— What is the character of expert meetings and groups?
— What is their impact on the ombudsman's work?
— What are the limitations to their effectiveness?

Design and methodology

This study was qualitative in nature; it adopted a case study design and took expert meetings and groups as the basic unit of analysis. Within this broad framework, both primary and secondary data were collected. Primary data were collected through in-depth interviews with four participants at the ombudsman institution (Barneombudet). Participants were asked questions about the rationale, character, significance and challenges of expert meetings and groups. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Secondary data also was obtained through review of documents about the ombudsman and about expert meetings and groups. These documents included: The Act and Instructions for the Ombudsman, Handbook on Expert meetings and Groups, and an unpublished report on the ombudsman's experience involving children in policy and other areas of decision-making. Other documents included activity reports on individual expert groups involving children with a family member in prison, those

who had experienced incest, children in municipal housing, children of deported parents, those with experience of domestic violence and children who survived the massacre at Utøya. The entire process of data collection was completed in February 2015.

Analysis of primary data was conducted in accordance with principles of the thematic approach (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2008) using Nvivo software. The program's auto coding command was applied to facilitate categorisation of transcribed interviews into themes representing each research question. These broad themes were then opened for in-depth scrutiny by carefully reading through each. This was intended to tease out subthemes and code matching responses under them; hence, representing Punch's (2005: 206) concept indicator model. Concurrently, this level of analysis was supported by NVivo's memoing function to facilitate the development of analytic reflections on the data and establish connections between different coded material and participants. A more selective analysis was then undertaken by scrutinising the codes, comparing their content and identifying areas of convergence and divergence. This process helped to generate thinly refined, mutually exclusive and analytical codes and code properties along which this report is structured. The analysis of secondary data was accomplished using a qualitative content approach (Bryman, 2012; Schreier, 2012), supported by codes generated from primary data.

Ethical considerations

After discussions with the Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD), it was ascertained that formal ethical approval was not required since the study did not involve collecting sensitive or personal data from primary participants. However, in agreement with the standard ethical guidelines, all participants were given written and verbal information about the research and consented to participate. At an institutional level, the ombudsman was contacted and gave permission for expert meetings and groups to be studied and for the researcher to access the necessary documents pertaining to their organisation.

Findings and discussion

Findings are presented and discussed according to the main themes that emerged from the data.

Character of expert meetings and groups and perceptions of their rationale

As a primary mechanism for the advancement of children's participation, expert meetings and groups present some distinctive features, which essentially influence and define interactions between children and adults. The initial idea and the subject of discussion are largely an adult domain:

> We tell them that we are the ombudsman and we won't be able to help you personally, but we would like you to share with us some ideas of how you have experienced your own lives and what has happened in your life, not that we can help you, but that we can make good recommendations… [Participant 2, Barneombudet]

While this suggests that children are merely invited to share their views on predetermined issues rather than to challenge adult assumptions and or confer on children the liberty to make important decisions, we find that both initiatives pursue a policy of information dissemination to children.

> All participants must be informed about the purpose of holding the meeting; what you will discuss and how you will go about it. Where possible, this can be done in advance by sending an email to the school, to a contact person or directly to the children/young people… [Expert handbook]

Children are informed about the ethical duty of confidentiality but also the ombudsman's obligation to report abuse or other forms of injustice or violence in which violation of rights is suspected to child welfare services. The manual on expert meetings and groups clearly stipulates that such information should be provided in a manner and language appropriate to children's situation. Although the main agenda is determined by adults, participants are considerably empowered to participate from an informed standpoint.

Similarly, the expert meetings and groups emphasise the role of evaluation and feedback, both as a process and outcome. For instance, facilitators are encouraged to seek participant's views on the relevance and effectiveness of methods of engagement. Expert meetings and groups also ensure that participants are informed about the outcome of the engagement as illustrated below.

> It is also important at the end that if we produce stuff like this (pointing to a report on expert groups), we share it with them in some way. We make sure that when we come up with something that reflects their opinions, we send them a copy so that they know that they have been part of it. [Participant 2, Barneombudet]

Besides emphasising the value of feedback, this excerpt also underscores the ombudsman's obligation to account to rights holders who are the participants in expert meetings and groups.

Whether meetings or groups, the crosscutting feature is that of 'the expert'; or as one participant explained, a competent child and an active participant in their environment.

> Children in kindergartens at the age of four or five have very strong opinions of right and wrong; how to behave towards each other; what they want to play with or what they want to do. Therefore, there must be room where children are invited to say what they want. [Participant 1, Barneombudet]

This account emphasises that adults must work on their attitudes if they are to understand and level the ground for a democratic engagement with children. It emphasises that adults must recognise and appreciate children's competencies and strengths despite their age.

Within the above framework, the overall conception of the rationale of expert meetings and groups is to promote the children's right to participation.

> The responsibility for us to promote children's participation comes mainly from the Convention on the Rights of the Child, but I think it is in the Act as well that we are supposed to work particularly with the children's rights. [Participant 2, Barneombudet]

As a complementary view on the rights perspective, the architects of expert meetings and groups appreciate that not only do children have important views, but that those views can significantly improve the quality and relevance of decisions regarding their livelihoods.

> If we do not facilitate children's participation, we lose a lot of very important knowledge because I do not know how it is to be five years old today. I knew it once, but that is 50 years ago…, so I need that knowledge because then we can prepare our laws, our systems and society in a better way. Therefore, it is more collaborative with the children's needs at every time. [Participant 1, Barneombudet]

The excerpt underscores the idea of the competent child and that predominantly adult-led decision-making systems can benefit by harnessing the views of children.

Impact of expert meetings and groups on the ombudsman's work

Existing evidence indicates that with adherence to some standards, participation provides an array of benefits such as greater efficiency, citizen empowerment, democratic governance and sustainable development (Lombard, 2013). Similarly, findings from this study also indicate different ways through which the ombudsman's work is enhanced by involving children through expert meetings and groups. The most significant ones are discussed below.

Improvement in the institution's effectiveness and relevance

As earlier reiterated, a core role of the ombudsman is to argue the case for children's rights and well-being in various spheres of society, particularly in decision-making processes. In this regard, expert meetings and groups have made the following contribution:

> Our role is to give some advice to the government and even more interesting is that prior to giving the advice, we appreciate that we have to talk with children that have experienced the system because they know how it is to live in a child welfare system.

> Nobody else can know what it is like to live in a child welfare system. [Participant 3, Barneombudet]

Another participant stated:

> We can say that we are confident that our recommendations are good because they have come directly from talking with young people. I am more confident about recommendations when they have been influenced by, for instance, organisations that work with young people or by research; but I am even more confident when these recommendations are influenced by the young people. I think that is the main thing, that we are bringing children and young people's voices to the forefront. [Participant 2, Barneombudet]

Whereas proposals from independent actors such as the ombudsman are a good way to strengthen children's rights and governance, it is even more effective if their recommendations are directly influenced by children's opinions. Therefore, the meetings and groups provide a valuable mechanism through which the ombudsman can incorporate the children's perspectives in its work. Indeed, there are indications that proposals influenced by expert meetings and groups have had an impact on decisions on how to improve children's rights and well-being.

> As a result of recommendations from hospital experts, we know that many doctors have changed the guidelines on how they talk to children. Advice from children with family members in prison has also guided renovation of the waiting rooms to make them more child-friendly all over the country. [Participant 2, Barneombudet]

Through expert groups and meetings, adult dominated systems can make decisions that are in harmony with the interests of children. A process that offers children a platform to express their views and have them considered can help to influence both individual and system-wide orientation towards greater observance and respect for children's rights. Evidence from the above examples show that expert meetings and groups are already doing this.

> Expert meetings and groups promote a culture of participation.

Creating a culture of participation is not a one-off activity, but rather a process that develops over time; usually upon recognition of the benefits that accrue from involving people, such as the ability to function more efficiently. Findings of this study indicate an effort to transform ad hoc expert meetings into a mechanism through which to foster routine engagement with young people.

> For us, this expert meeting started an expert group; tomorrow, 15 young people are coming here to meet us. They are travelling from all over Norway and coming here. So, that is important for us that now as an expert group, we can continue to work with them to transform education in Norway. [Participant 1, Barneombudet]

Beyond the institutional success, participants in this study reported how the experience of expert meetings and groups has influenced other institutions to listen to children's views and involve them in decision-making processes.

> What we have seen is that there are a lot of people on the outside who are interested in how we do this and then want to learn from us. So, we have tried to organise a course and we do many lectures on participation for these organisations. [Participant 2, Barneombudet)

Another participant explained that the consultative model adopted in expert meetings and groups was already being used by institutions such as hospitals to improve children's experiences.

> There has also been a change in the practice in some hospitals where they are making their own youth panels that give advice to the hospitals on how to arrange the medical treatment, how to arrange the rooms. This is a big change that is coming up in almost all Norwegian hospitals. [Participant 1, Barneombudet]

These findings suggest that the success of expert meetings and groups organised by the ombudsman may be creating momentum for children's involvement in the activities of other institutions. There is a need to build upon such a window of opportunity to promote greater realisation of children's rights to participation.

> Enhancing favourable perceptions of children in society

A significant bottleneck to the realisation of children's participation stems from impressions that other people, especially adults, hold about them. Viewing children and young people as people with underdeveloped views, thus inferior to adults, relegates them to the position of second-class citizens in society. However, the experience of expert meetings and groups appears to be challenging this chauvinist thinking. Adult facilitators of these groups were amazed at how much children knew and that they could contribute meaningful suggestions for improving experiences of their environment.

> Whenever we conduct these meetings, I always learn something new; they always give me another angle to look at something and they always have the solution that is quite simple, a solution which we have not thought of. Much of their advice challenges us and gets us thinking why we have not been acting like that. [Participant 4, Barneombudet]

Another participant reflected on a practical experience of domestic violence in the family and how children's views were raising adults' consciousness about indifference to children in such situations.

> Today, when there is violence in a home and the police come, they do not only ask if there are children at home; they also want to speak to them. However, it wasn't always

like that [in the past]. For many years, the police would only talk to parents in a home where violence had been reported, but suddenly a bunch of some nine children who experienced the problem pointed out something that all the professionals and adults did not see. That is why we need to speak to children. [Participant 2, Barneombudet]

As shown in this example, it is not uncommon for adults discussing an issue to say to themselves: "children have nothing to contribute in this matter; it is too advanced for them; they will not understand". However, the experience of expert meetings and groups disapproves such thinking and teaches adults that by adopting a collaborative rather than a prescriptive engagement with children, they can promote a better understanding of children's circumstances and how to improve them.

Expert meetings and groups engender children's empowerment

When children are appreciated as competent individuals and involved in activities within their environment, they develop confidence and believe more in themselves; consequently, they are empowered to take charge of their lives. A participant in this study emphasised that participating in expert meetings and groups helps children to appreciate the complex process of decision-making.

Participation gives meaning! The issue here is that if I get orders every day from my boss, I can do what they require me to do but in the end, I miss the meaning, but if she invites me in to discuss, she can tell me why she is asking me to do this and that and when I understand, I can prepare to fulfil the task. That is the same with children; if you invite them, they understand the context and meaning and they get prepared to fulfil the task. [Participant 1, Barneombudet]

The point to be emphasised here is 'fulfilment of the task'. Therefore, children's participation empowers them to harness their potential, which would not have been possible in a paternalistic relationship. A manifestation of children's empowerment is clearly depicted in the following excerpt:

A few minutes ago, we had a phone call from some 5th graders, up in the north of Norway. They were very worried about their colleague that did not get the help he needed. That is very impressive from a 5th grader. They saw that their friend had Down syndrome and he disappeared from class and this made them worried about his learning and safety. [Participant 2, Barneombudet]

Empowerment is considered to emerge naturally if society sets reasonable boundaries on children's activities. Children need to feel that they can contribute ideas without being reprimanded or judged using an adult's yardstick. Thorough expert meetings and groups, the ombudsman helps to nurture a sense of autonomy and confidence, upon which children draw to negotiate important pathways in life. As shown above, such a feeling is important, particularly in safeguarding children's rights and well-being through prompt reporting.

Challenges to the effectiveness of expert meetings and groups

The goal of expert meetings and groups is to provide children with an opportunity through which to have a voice in decisions on matters affecting them, through the work of the ombudsman. However, like any other well-intentioned initiatives, expert meetings and groups face both structural and procedural challenges, which leads to limiting their effectiveness. Notable challenges to this effect are considered below.

Difficulty following up recommendations and evaluating their impact

While expert meetings and groups have been established to serve as participatory mechanisms for children (through the ombudsman) to influence decision-making processes, this study shows that there are no clear-cut mechanisms through which the implementation of those recommendations can be monitored. One of the participants illustrated:

> Our job is to give recommendations to politicians and other authorities about what they should change in the laws and policies, but then it stops there. We do not really follow up to see if anything has changed. [Participant 2, Barneombudet]

Whereas the ombudsman shared some examples where children's views have influenced real changes in institutions such as police, hospitals and child welfare agencies, the lack of an established plan on how to monitor uptake of their recommendations is a daunting challenge to the achievement of genuine participation and realisation of the children's rights in general.

Ethical dilemmas regarding the selection of children

Although expert meetings and groups are intended to address the gap in children's participation in society, it should be noted that in reality a few children are selected to represent others. As explained, decisions involved in this selection process are very delicate because they require contemplating different ethical and professional considerations.

> We have to ensure that these children have been seeing a psychologist or working through the trauma, or that they are not just in the middle of it. It is not that you can get over it forever, but you have to move on. So, we make sure that we have children who have been able to move on in some way… [Participant 4, Barneombudet]

In the above scenario, the participant explains that one should exercise maximum caution when dealing with particular groups of children, given the sensitivity of topics that are discussed such as domestic violence, incarceration of parents and terrorist attacks. The goal is to maximise opportunities for the involvement of children, while minimising possible risks such as relapse. However, this process tends to be

time-consuming and may limit the actual time available to consult with children. Other reports suggest that the identification of children to talk to is undermined by perceptions by parents that the children cannot participate in such initiatives.

Promoting a sustainable participatory ethos

Even in their conception, expert meetings and groups are only intended to offer a consultative framework through which to improve the relevance of the ombudsman. But ultimately, the aspiration is to promote a broad-based culture of participation among both public and private institutions working with children.

> I think that the biggest challenge for us is not to conduct more expert meetings unless we want to find new information. Our biggest challenge is to try and project this way of working to municipalities and anyone else working with children…. We want to ensure that all people that are working with issues involving children and young people think about having expert meetings and expert groups. [Participant 2, Barneombudet]

As previously reiterated, the ombudsman can build upon the momentum generated by expert meetings and groups to inculcate a broad-based culture of participation. Indeed, the essence of genuine participation is if it can facilitate adoption of a proactive rather than reactive approach to the realisation of children's rights and promotion of their well-being in society.

Discussion

The findings of this study attest to the ombudsman's willingness to promote children's rights as per the institution's mandate. As a 'watchdog for the rights of children' (Miljeteig, 2006: 24), the ombudsman can contribute significantly to the promotion of children's rights as enshrined in the CRC and ultimately ensure an improvement in their overall well-being. While there are several ways in which this might be achieved, including "complaints investigation, and identification of system-wide deficiencies" (Bearup and Palusci, 1999: 449), this study has established that expanding opportunities for children's participation equally constitutes a viable channel for realisation of their rights. Indeed, studies elsewhere have shown that children's participation not only benefits them directly, but it is also a springboard for the realisation of other rights (Lansdown, 2001, 2010). Participation instils a sense of confidence, self-esteem and the ability to take on everyday challenges in children (Burke, 2010; Ciara, 2010; Malone and Hartung, 2010). Children develop self-control, autonomy and greater sensitivity and they can make responsible decisions. Therefore, participation becomes an important ingredient for children in the quest for equality and social justice; it also contributes to initiatives to alleviate child poverty (Percy-Smith and Thomas, 2010).

In this regard and considering that in most societies children are often treated as spectators in mainstream decision-making processes (Hodgkin, 1997; Lansdown,

2010; Theis, 2010), participation is a vital channel to underscore the plight of children, but also to empower them to play an active a role in shaping the outcomes of their lives. This important milestone was realised with the adoption of the CRC by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1989. Since then, the need to listen to children and involve them in decision-making has become the onus of all entities working with children. Thus, all stakeholders working with children, primarily the state, have "obligations to respect, to protect, and to fulfil" the rights of the child (UNFPA, 2010: 47). The ombudsman, specifically as a dedicated and independent representative for children in society, has both a moral and legal obligation to create opportunities through which children's views can come into the limelight (Hodgkin and Newell, 2007; Lansdown, 2001; Miljeteig, 2005, 2006; Rébecca, 2009; Sedletzki, 2012; Thomas, 2011; United Nations, 2002; Veronica, 2008). Therefore, facilitating children's participation is not a matter of benevolence, but one of obligation. Not doing so implies a violation of fundamental rights guaranteed under international, regional and national laws.

Established within that spirit, the expert meetings and groups are intended to provide a framework within which children in Norway can impact the ombudsman's work through its routine recommendations to public and private institutions. This study has shown that the approach adopted by these initiatives is highly consultative in a manner that does not necessarily redistribute power and therefore decision-making to children, but rather provides them with an opportunity to express their views to adults who make decisions. Although this approach is not necessarily empowering (Lansdown, 2011), it is a step in the right direction, considering that it recognises children's agency and the need to take their perspectives into consideration whenever adults make decisions (Ciara, 2010; Hart, 2008; Percy-Smith and Thomas, 2010; Sedletzki, 2012). Besides, some of the limitations to its effectiveness can be offset by providing children with age-appropriate information (Cloke and Davies, 1997; Lansdown, 1997; Sinclair, 1998; Skivenes and Strandbu, 2006). This issue has been emphasised by the expert meetings and groups through an information and feedback mechanism.

As an independent human rights Institution for children, the ombudsman can contribute significantly to the realisation of the rights enshrined in the CRC by not only monitoring the actions of institutions to fulfil these rights, following up on rights violations where they occur and promoting a change in polices that further advance the realisation of these rights, but also proactively facilitating processes through which children can directly interface with decision makers and make their voices heard (Sedletzki, 2012: 1). Evidence from this study indicates that expert meetings and groups as a participatory approach for children can contribute meaningfully to enhancing the ombudsman's role both as an advocate and watchdog for children's rights (Hodgkin and Newell, 2007; Miljeteig, 2006; Sedletzki, 2012). There are reports of adjustments of environments in hospital and prison settings to make them more child-friendly. Expert meetings and groups seem to have generated the impetus among other public and private organisations to involve children in their activities as evidenced by those which have established their own mechanisms through which to solicit children's views and consider them in decision-making.

Perceptions of adults regarding children's competencies seem to be less paternalistic and thus more favourable to support routine involvement. For children who have participated in these initiatives, reports by adult facilitators suggest growth of a sense of autonomy, self-discovery, self-worth and greater awareness about the environment within which they live as well as the risks and opportunities it presents. These findings are consistent with existing evidence showing that the ombudsman can significantly support initiatives to fulfil the rights of children by promoting accountability, challenging undemocratic power relations, impacting policy and improving effectiveness of mechanisms to detect, report and remedy rights abuses (Sedletzki, 2012: 2). In its own right, the involvement of children contributes solutions that are novel, less costly to implement, embed a children's perspective and are therefore acceptable and sustainable (Hodgkin and Newell, 2008). Ultimately, this empowers children to play an active role in shaping the outcomes of their lives (Sedletzki, 2012: 249), rather than being on the receiving end of adult-conceived solutions.

Despite these reported benefits, this study draws attention to both process and structural issues that might potentially impede the extent to which expert meetings and groups can provide a formidable mechanism through which to advance organic children participation. This concept was developed by Antonio Gramsci to describe a scenario "where children themselves have an opportunity to participate in society in truly authentic ways as 'active citizens'" (Malone and Hartung, 2010: 25) or what has been referred to as participation on children's own terms (Cloke and Davies, 1997; Nordenfors, 2010; Percy-Smith and Thomas, 2010). Such a conception of participation requires that adults desist from setting the stage for children or fitting them in predefined structures; instead, they allow young people the discretion to decide what ways they themselves consider appropriate to participate. However, the kind of participation advanced by expert meetings and groups gives adults more leverage in various aspects of decision-making such as which groups of children participate and what they discuss. With such a restrictive orientation, expert meetings and groups stand the risk of coercing children to comply with adult-defined definitions, instead of adapting the process in ways that empower children to participate in a manner appropriate with their age and evolving capacities (Lansdown, 2005; 2011: 155). Beyond such process hiccups, the study notes that the lack of a clear follow-up mechanism also poses limitations to the uptake of recommendations intended to strengthen children's rights in society.

Although warranting our attention, these limitations should not be used to discredit expert meetings and groups as a totally futile initiative. As the findings have suggested, these initiatives add value to the ombudsman's mandate to strengthen the governance of child rights in Norway by ensuring that children are participants in the process. Notwithstanding, some issues raise legitimate questions to illuminate practical challenges within the field of children's participation. These include concerns regarding who can participate in these groups and meetings; how effective they are given their numerical limitations; how their recommendations should be implemented and by whom; and what the future of participation beyond expert meetings and groups is. For instance, while precautions to ensure that only children

who have overcome crises can come to meetings might be motivated by professional and ethical considerations regarding the risks associated with such participation (Munro, 2002; Welbourne, 2012), they certainly disregard the appropriate age, evolving capacity (Lansdown, 2011) and notion of participation. This however continues to expose the participation-protection controversy (Darlington, Healy, and Feeney, 2010; Healy, 1998) within the framework of children's participation. Although legitimate, questions pertaining to the numerical constraints of expert meetings and groups and the institutions' inability to follow-up on implementation of recommendations fail to appreciate the structural and legal complexities of promoting participation. Truly, the ombudsman has an obligation to promote children's participation, but that should not be misrepresented to exceed this institution's mandate. Rather, the spirit of the clause is more to do with being able to project an example that promotes a broad-based culture of participation in society. Similarly, though the question regarding enforcement of the institution's recommendations presents a real dilemma, it remains a legal matter, beyond the resolution of this study. As a matter of fact, the Act and Instructions for the Ombudsman explicitly state its mandate in terms of no more than "proposing measures that can strengthen children's safety under the law" with an emphasis on proposing.

In the final analysis, making an objective assessment of the effectiveness of the expert meetings and groups as a participatory instrument for children, through which to enhance the effectiveness and relevance of the ombudsman as a watchdog of their rights in society requires one to take cognizance of limitations of the operational context; not only in terms of the legal and structural aspects, but also from a sociocultural and economic perspective. Without discounting that the thrust is for a participatory arrangement defined by diminishing power relations between children and adults, where the latter are ready and willing to take proactive actions aimed at eliciting the spontaneous participation of children, such an aspiration may not be easily realised without sufficient consideration of the limitations posed by the context, as the evidence from this study has indicated. There is even a need to stretch the limits of our understanding and ultimately the practice of participation beyond isolated and ad hoc institutional initiatives, to an all-embracing culture which all children everywhere can experience in a manner appropriate to their age and evolving capacity. The assertion that "the different forms of participation represent valid and meaningful approaches to implementing Article 12, but offers a different degree of opportunity for children to influence matters affecting them, and, accordingly, differing degrees of empowerment" (Lansdown, 2011: 147) only becomes relevant depending on its demonstrated congruence with the fundamental premises above.

Conclusion

This study has generated evidence suggesting that involving children in the process through expert meetings and groups is not only a fulfilment of their inalienable rights, but that it can also add value to these recommendations and enhance

their relevance and effectiveness. For children with unique life experiences, expert meetings and groups can offer an opportunity not only to dialogue with others, but also to offer useful suggestions on how to assist those who go through similar experiences. Nevertheless, this study has also indicated that although the spirit within which these initiatives are conceptualised appreciates children's agency, the actual practice appears to give adults more influence on the process. Furthermore, the lack of a clear follow up mechanism on the implementation of these recommendations poses a dilemma regarding the futility of expert meetings and groups. Though legitimate, it was not within the scope of this study to address such questions. However, the real measure of the relevance of expert meetings and groups depends not so much on how they impact on the ombudsman's work, but rather on the extent to which their example can generate the impetus for the realisation of age-appropriate children's participation in other spheres of society.

Limitations

The main limitation for this study is the possibility of generalising findings to the wider population or other contexts. Expert meetings and groups constitute one of approaches to promote children and young people's participation rights. Although it offers useful insights, the findings of this study cannot be adopted as a standard for assessing the effectiveness of participatory approaches elsewhere, but must be understood within the context, as well as the opportunities and challenges it presents. In addition, social desirability bias (Chung and Monroe, 2003; Sabrina and Maria, 2004) is likely to play out where information on a phenomenon is primarily generated from insiders. However, the author observes that the style of questioning adopted during data collection facilitated the participants' self-critique regarding the character, impact and limitations of expert meetings and groups. Finally, while involving children would have provided a more balanced story of expert meetings and groups, its practicality was limited by ethical and time considerations. Future studies of participatory approaches should ensure that children are involved as primary participants. Nevertheless, this study provides important insights regarding child participation in one particular context in order to promote learning and adaptation in others.

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Conclusion

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The aim of this book is to present several perspectives on Families, Children and Youth in Global Contexts. It brings together 14 chapters authored by the first cohort of students of the MFamily Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Programme, all of which are based on research of their Master's dissertations. In other words, the content of this book presents scientific knowledge related to children and families in different national settings. Some of the chapters present knowledge about transnational issues, when studying issues related to migration, where family members have moved from one national context to another. Others focus on policy or practices that concern families and children. After reading all the chapters some commonalities stand out.

a) To understand the lives and the prospects of children and families is vital when we want to study social phenomena, such as migration waves, integration issues, tackling poverty and the need for societal interventions in people' lives. Families will be actors par excellence in all of these common concerns.
b) It's of great importance to study various types of parenting, when trying to understand the challenges parents and children who migrate from different parts of the world might encounter. The content of this book will point at the importance of the need to find socialization styles that are acceptable in the new country as well as keeping links to family relations and customs in the home-country.
c) How a society handles different parenting styles can in other words be seen as an indicator of processes of inclusion, as well as exclusion, in that society. This raises questions how such processes can be placed in the continuum between positions that builds on ideas of assimilation versus ideas of multi-cultural integration.

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d)   The chapters in the book also study different forms of societal responsibilities and interventions, such as school systems, social policy arrangements, adoption systems, reception centers for refugees and child protection systems. Despite local differences found when comparing local solutions, some common concerns stand out. They should all be studied in relation to the idea of 'the best interest of the child' and of adherence to international conventions such as the Convention of the Rights of the Child.

e)   Another commonality for conclusions of many chapters is the need for more knowledge-production about children and families. Knowledge of the lives of families and children can be seen as a kind of social seismograph when it comes to registering societal issues important for the development of any society (Bojadzijev 2018). For instance, the integration of migrating families may predict future results for the children in schools and many other social phenomena.

This book adds to the knowledge of social work with children and families in a commendable way. The international perspectives addressed in the book makes the book particularly interesting and useful, both for students and academics. It is remarkable the quality of research stemming from the student's dissertations and look forward to the next publication.

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Families, Children and Youth in Global Contexts

Perspectives on Families, Children and Youth in Global Contexts brings together the main results of the research projects developed for their dissertations by the first graduate students of the Erasmus Mundus MFamily master's programme. Coming from a significant variety of countries mostly out of Europe, these students addressed, under different perspectives, the study of families, immigration and gender issues, children and young people in school and care settings, as well as welfare policies. As a whole the analyzes carried out by the authors of this book represent important contributions for understanding the current daily lives of families, children and youth at a global level.

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